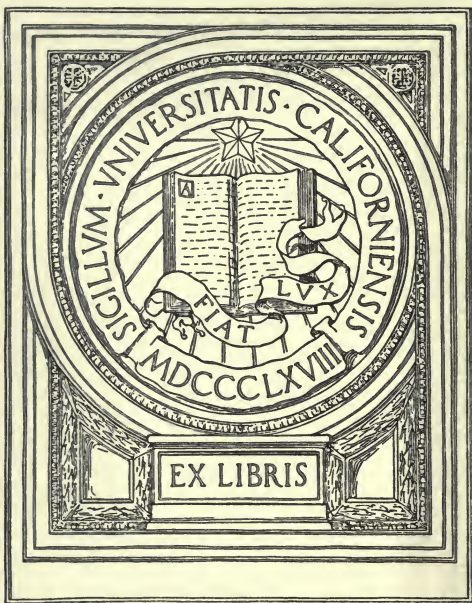


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THE
ELLIOTT FAMILY;

OR, THE
TRIALS OF NEW-YORK SEAMSTRESSES

BY CHARLES BURDETT,

AUTHOR OF

"NEVER TOO LATE," "TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS," "THE ADOPTED
CHILD," "EMMA, OR THE LOST FOUND," ETC.

"One half of this world knows not how the other half lives."

NEW YORK:
BAKER & SCRIBNER,

145 Nassau-Street, and 36 Park Row.

1850.

ENTERED ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS,
IN THE YEAR ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE,
BY E. WINCHESTER,
IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK.

P R E F A C E .

I FEEL it due to myself briefly to state the reasons which have prompted me to engage in a task of this nature, one more befitting and properly belonging to the female writers, whose feelings would naturally assimilate to, and cause them to sympathize with the sufferings of the female operatives of this city.

I suggested the idea to one or two much better fitted for the duty than myself, but no action was taken by them. I then determined to assume the responsible task myself ; and commenced at once the prosecution of inquiries, to the end that I might present nothing but facts. I approached the task with diffidence, for I felt that I was out of my proper sphere : but the motives which have prompted me, must prove my apology for that.

The perusal of a small volume, entitled "The Wrongs of Women," by Charlotte Elizabeth, in which the wrongs and sufferings of the laboring class of her countrywomen are vividly depicted, left so deep and abiding an impression upon my mind, that my own attention and interest were fully awakened to the consideration of the subject. I observed, however, that her characters were drawn exclusively from that class to whom toil and hardship seem

to be a birthright heritage,—from those who, having enjoyed but few of the comforts of life, were in comparative ignorance of the extent of their own privations.

In subsequent reflections, I could not fail to acknowledge that the wrongs and sufferings so faithfully illustrated in the writings of Charlotte Elizabeth belonged not alone to female operatives of the English nation; but report, inquiry, and close observation have alike borne testimony that even in our own midst the same grievances existed. Americans, however, have, alas ! their portion in the wrongs and oppressions too often heaped upon the class of female operatives ; and I did hope that some one of our female writers, whose talents and experience so well qualified them for the task, would bring these wrongs before the public in some more tangible shape than had yet been done.

In the pages which follow, there is no single line which cannot be substantiated by abundant proof of its truth. Indeed, I fear that the friends of the operatives will accuse me of not telling enough ; for in *no case* have I assumed the lowest rate of wages paid, but invariably that which may be termed the fairest prices. I have perhaps committed an error in weaving a story with such a subject : but I felt well assured that a dry detail of facts, however well-authenticated, would be, if read at all, forgotten too soon for any advantage to accrue by exciting public sympathy to those whose advantage I had in view ; and I thought it proper therefore to endeavor to excite an *interest* in the characters portrayed, which I hoped might leave some permanent impression.

I repeat, there is nothing of imagination in this volume. The family of Elliotts did reside in this city, but not under that name. Sufferings such as I have detailed were their portion ; and there

is not a single street in this great metropolis which cannot furnish a parallel case.

In the introduction of the frauds perpetrated in one branch of manufacture extensively carried on in this city, *Cap-making*, I have obtained my statements from one who suffered all the impositions detailed by the girl whom I have called Miss Edwards, and much more and worse might also be related to the same effect.

My sole object has been, to show to the public the utter inadequacy of the compensation paid for female labor, taking into consideration the nature of the work, and the time consumed: and my hope is, that some means may be devised whereby the condition of some thousands of female operatives in this city may be ameliorated. It is idle to say it cannot be done. If public sympathy is excited in their behalf, it will be done; and if the ladies of New York, ever foremost in every good work, will but step forward, with their usual promptness and energy, I cannot doubt that success would crown each effort.

I have in my possession facts establishing the most outrageous frauds and impositions practiced upon the seamstresses; but although truth is stranger than fiction, I have declined to use them at present, for the very fear that they are too monstrous to obtain credence. If this part of the task I have thus taken on myself shall meet with public approbation, I shall shortly ask attention through another volume, to the condition of another class of operatives—those who are compelled to work in shops where from thirty to two hundred are daily assembled. I shall show the frauds and impositions practiced upon them, the temptations to which they are hourly exposed, and the inevitable consequences of such associations. To that end, I shall gladly receive any well

authenticated statements with reference to this branch of the subject, and will thankfully avail myself of any information which will enable me to present such *facts* as shall exhibit the evils I hope to see corrected, in their true aspects. The motives which have prompted me to present this volume, must prove the apologists for the defects in manner and matter, which are too palpable to be passed over. It has not been written for the sake of writing, but with the simple wish, that through the statements it contains, public attention may be aroused to the true condition of the seamstresses of New York ; and some measures promptly adopted, as well to secure (to them) something like an adequate compensation for their toil, as to guard and protect them from the frauds and impositions daily practiced on them, and to which female operatives are always liable.

THE AUTHOR.



CLARA ELLIOTT.

CHAPTER I.

IN an upper room of a small, but neatly furnished two story house, in one of the many streets which cross Broadway, in the city of New-York, a mother and two daughters are grouped about the sick couch of the husband and father. The white quilt thrown over him, is scarce more white than the thin, attenuated hands which are moving in quick and restless action upon it. The snowy pillow lends a marked contrast to the ghastly, sallow lineaments of the sufferer, whose frame is ever and anon convulsed with agony, in the effort to draw the fast-expiring breath. The eyes are fixed and glassy, lacking all expression, save that of terrible anguish. The lips, white and covered with froth, which the careful hand of the weeping wife wipes tenderly away, are colorless, and ever and anon contracted with terrible pain.

The husband and father—the kindest and best of both—is on his death-bed, and the wife, who has for

four and twenty years shared in his joys and sorrows—the wife, who has never known a change in her feelings or affections, from the hour in which, at the altar of God, she plighted her maiden vows, to the hour in which she stands by his dying couch—is by the side of the beloved husband, watching the glimmering of the lamp of life, as it flickers in its socket.

The daughters, too, who have grown up under his tender care, who have ever been faithful, dutiful, affectionate children—the daughters, whose career from infancy to girlhood, from joyous girlhood to matured youth, he has watched, with jealous, affectionate care—are beside him, longing for one parting word, one look of kind remembrance, one single last farewell: but in vain. The eyes can no more return the affectionate glances which were wont to cheer him on his return from his daily toil. The tongue, which never gave utterance to aught save words of love and kindness, can no more respond to the greetings of heartfelt welcome, which ever awaited his return to his cheerful home. All is hushed, and in a few moments the angel of death will have sounded that summons which all must obey.

A faint motion of the lips, a quivering of the whole frame, one long, deep-drawn breath—the last expiring effort of nature in its struggle with the fell tyrant—and the dust has returned to the dust whence it sprang—the soul has returned to the great Being who gave it birth.

Mrs. Elliott was a widow; Clara and Laura Elliott

were fatherless; and oh! how much do those two words reveal of misery, of agony, of wretchedness! How much of awful solemnity is crowded into those two words—the widow and the fatherless!

Mrs. Elliott did not sob, nor shriek, nor swoon, as the event was not sudden nor unexpected; for her husband had laid upon that bed of sickness for many weary weeks, suffering more than falls to the common lot of humanity, from a painful disease, but bearing his pains and anguish with resignation and fortitude, for he was upheld by a strength greater than his own, and by a grace which is never refused to those who seek it in sincerity and with faith.

Clara and Laura, who possessed less firmness than their mother, though they too had looked forward to the sad bereavement with trembling fearfulness, could scarcely realize that the worst had now befallen them, and their grief was manifested in tears of bitterness, and sobs, which they could not repress. Mrs. Elliott carefully drew the sheet over the cold and stiffened form of him she had loved so well, and summoning her daughters, left the chamber of death.

The news was soon made known to the neighbors, many of whom came in with tenders of their assistance if required, while others came to offer sympathy in their bereavement, and both were gratefully accepted; for when the heart is bowed down with grief, it readily receives, and truly appreciates sympathy from feeling hearts, and willingly suffers itself to be lightened of a part of its dreary load.

In a few hours the body was encased in its last habiliments of death, the snowy shroud, and the narrow coffin, that common receptacle of humanity, held him in its cold embrace.

On the second day after the death of Mr. Elliott, the house was thronged with friends, assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to the remains of one who had ever been eminently worthy of all respect and esteem while he was among and with them. The solemn tones of the pious minister of God, impressively urging upon his hearers the necessity of preparing themselves for a summons from the same inexorable tyrant, fell upon the ears of many who vowed inwardly that the lesson should not be lost upon them—upon some, who forgot it ere the sounds of his voice had died away—and upon the ears of others who had their lamps trimmed and filled with oil, awaiting the coming of the bridegroom, ready at any moment to go forth and enter with him into the marriage feast.

A long line of friends follows the body to its last resting-place; the earth receives the earth, and the crowd separate, each to return to his respective affairs, and to forget in a few hours the solemn scene in which he has performed a part.

Mrs. Elliott and her daughters returned to their saddened home, and none accompanied them thither: for all felt that their grief was too holy and pure to be intruded on by offers of comfort or words of consolation at such a time. Time alone could heal the wound which the arrow of death had left rankling in their bosoms, and

time alone, at once the destroyer and the silent comforter, could restore to them the peace and serenity of which they had been robbed. And while they are mourning in the sadness of their hearts, let me briefly narrate some of the most material circumstances connected with their history, necessary to a proper appreciation of their characters and feelings.

Mr. Elliott was a mechanic, who had married, almost as soon as he was out of his time, a girl whose prospects were not more brilliant or more cheering than his own. He was industrious, economical and temperate. Possessing a warm heart and an affectionate disposition, he was well calculated for domestic happiness, and in the partner whom he had chosen to share his lot with him, he had found all he dared to look or hope for.

Mrs. Elliott was the daughter of a worthy man, the only child, and she had been educated as well as his means would allow, but with the double purpose of making her useful to herself, in case occasion should require, as well as ornamental in society; and she was as truly happy in the love of the honest, hard-working youth who sought her hand, as she could have been in the glitter and vain show of wealth, with all its heartlessness and pride.

He prospered in his affairs, and sought no higher happiness than was to be found in the society of his beloved wife and beautiful children, Clara and Laura. A few years after his marriage, husband and wife were brought to the knowledge and love of God, and became hoping, trusting members of the church of Christ, and

acting upon consistent principles, they sought early to instil the same glorious truths into the hearts of their children, which had ever brought peace and happiness to their home and hearts.

Their lives were marked by no event of more than ordinary occurrence. Mr. Elliott prospered, and secured friends by his honest and prompt mode of dealing, while his wife and daughters grew into the hearts of all who were admitted to their friendship.

Having by frugality and economy amassed a little money, he had invested it in the house in which he resided, leaving, however, nearly one half its value upon mortgage with the former owner, from whom he had purchased it. At the time he was taken sick, he was in treaty with the original owner, to exchange the house and lot for a small farm in a neighboring county, but his long-continued illness, and subsequent death, prevented him from completing an arrangement which he had long cherished at heart; for he disliked much the idea of having any incumbrance on his property, and had purposed to procure the farm free from all indebtedness.

An examination of his affairs, which took place soon after his death, showed that, although he was entirely free from indebtedness to any person, except some very trivial amounts, he had left nothing in the shape of property, except the house in which his family resided, and which, as I have said, was mortgaged for nearly, if not more than the half of its value, and the term for which the mortgage was given had nearly expired.

father a
tailor

Mrs. Elliott consulted with a friend, in whom she placed implicit confidence, and acting under his advice, made efforts to dispose of the house, nothing doubting that the surplus, after paying off the mortgage, would, if properly invested, enable her, by industry and frugality, to maintain her family in comfortable circumstances.

The situation in which she was placed, rendered a sale absolutely necessary ; and much to her chagrin and disappointment, the property was disposed of at what might be almost termed a sacrifice, as not more than one hundred dollars were left for the widow, after the incumbrance upon the house had been paid off, and all the necessary expenses of selling, etc., defrayed.

Smaller apartments were immediately hired, and into them she soon afterward removed, with her two daughters, intending, as many others were compelled to do, to support themselves by their industry, not doubting that with their needles, they could earn a comfortable subsistence. Clara had learned the trade of a dress-maker, and Laura had so often worked at tailors' work for her father, that she felt confident she would be able, in a very short time, to earn a fair livelihood, while Mrs. Elliott was destined to the charge of their domestic arrangements, and to do all she could to assist the girls.

They could not, of course, maintain the same position in society which had been accorded to them during the lifetime of their father ; but they did not complain, for they were too wise to grieve at the loss of their summer

friends, who could rejoice with them only in their prosperity, but who deserted and forsook them at the first cold breath of adversity; and as they had never been educated or taught to rely for pleasure, much less for happiness, solely on the society of others, the loss of it caused them but trifling inconvenience, and they lived cheerfully and contentedly by themselves, and for themselves alone, looking for true happiness only in the comforts of a religious life, and placing their sole confidence and trust in the Great Power who ruleth the destinies of the earth—of its great and rich, as well as its poor and needy.



CHAPTER II.

IN an elegantly furnished parlor, in one of the fashionable squares in the upper part of the city, a lady, who has passed the age which is termed, by courtesy, uncertain, and on whose brow and cheek time had left traces which no art could entirely conceal—though art had been called in to replace all that age had taken away of youth and beauty—is seated upon a soft velvet couch, languidly giving directions to a servant, who is arranging a great variety of ornaments about the room for a large party to be held that evening.

Two young ladies, her daughters, are lounging each upon a sofa, watching the motions of the harassed servant, and ever and anon turning to hear, and comment with flippancy upon the directions which issue from the lips of their mother. The three are attired in loose morning dresses, and have evidently passed the greater part of the morning hours in arranging them, so as to present the appearance of being perfectly careless, but at the same time as becoming as possible.

“There, John, that will do,” said the elderly lady, as John moved for the twentieth time a magnificent candelabra, which had been purchased for the occasion.

"Has Mr. Watson sent home that set of China I engaged yesterday?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And the cut glass?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Very well, you may go now, and see if the articles ordered from the confectioner's have come home," and the obedient John withdrew, leaving the mother and daughters alone.

"Mother," suddenly exclaimed the youngest of the young ladies, as if aroused by some sudden thought, and starting from her recumbent posture, "have you sent a card to Mr. Robertson?"

"Mr. Robertson! Why certainly not. Nobody knows who Mr. Robertson is. We met him, it is true, at Doctor B * * * 's, the other night, but I am inclined to think he was only asked there because the doctor was a great friend of his father when he was in South Carolina, and could not well avoid asking him."

"I am sure, mother," replied the young lady, who evidently was bent upon having Mr. Robertson among the guests of the evening, "I am sure I heard Doctor B * * * say he was a young man of excellent family, possessing brilliant talents, and that his acquaintance would be an acquisition in any circle. Besides, I am sure he was very attentive to us, and I found him very interesting."

"He may do for Doctor B * * * 's circle, but not for ours, Euphemia; so make yourself easy," replied the mother, imperiously. "He is not a match for either of

my girls, and I want no fortune-hunters running to my house. So consider that acquaintance as at an end."

"Mother," chimed in Maria, the elder daughter, "I am quite sure you do Mr. Robertson injustice. He is not a fortune-hunter. Indeed, I do not think he has ever dreamed of a wife; for he is just commencing his profession, and has barely means to support himself."

"Well, well, I don't want to hear any more of Mr. Robertson. He has not received a card, and will not from me, and I doubt not we can manage to get on without him for one evening."

A very slight pout was perceptible upon the pretty lips of the pretty daughters, whose wishes were thus firmly overruled, but they knew it was useless to contend with their mother upon such a point, and wisely forbore making any further allusion to Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Robertson, who appeared to have so much interested the young ladies, was a young gentleman of very brilliant talents, as Doctor B * * * had said, who had moved to New-York to pursue the study of the law. His father had been immensely wealthy, but unfortunate speculations ruined him, and at his death, Charles was left with a slender income, barely sufficient for his support; but possessing a strong mind, he did not give way to useless repinings at the loss of his wealth, and having determined to carve out a fortune for himself, in the pursuit of some honorable profession, he had selected the law as most suited to his temperament and talents. Doctor B * * *, at whose house the ladies had met him, was an intimate acquaintance of his father's, and he soon

learned to love the son, not only for the father's sake, but for the very many excellent qualities which he was not long in discovering that he possessed. Of him it is unnecessary to say more at present.

The ladies, whose brief conversation the reader has overheard, deserve a more particular notice.

Mr. Simmons had commenced life (so far as is known to history,) as an errand boy in a lawyer's office, but his activity attracted the attention of one of his master's clients, a wholesale merchant, who had taken him into his employ for his board and clothing, until he could earn more, promising to advance him as his conduct should deserve. The advancement, however, did him little good, for his conduct in his new situation became so displeasing to his employer, that he was compelled to turn him adrift; and he was, after wandering about for several weeks, almost in a state of starvation, picked up by a poor but charitable tailor, who taught him his trade.

Of his parents he knew nothing, but it is charitable to presume they were very worthy and respectable people. He had not the most indistinct recollection of them, and therefore any allusion to them could not cause him any pain, nor was he in any danger of having their faults or vices—if they had any—thrown in his teeth, as he had no recollection at all of them.

He managed to stay with his kind master until he had learned his trade sufficiently well to set up for himself; and just when he was beginning to be useful to the man who, through motives of charity, had given him food and shelter, he left him, to carve out a fortune for himself.

At the age of twenty-three, he fell in with a pretty seamstress, who worked for the same shop as himself, and after a very short acquaintance, they were made man and wife. Her parents (she had the advantage of Mr. Simmons, in knowing her parents,) had managed to make a livelihood, the father as a shoemaker, and the mother lending her assistance in the support of the domestic establishment, by keeping a stand in one of the markets, for the sale of fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Ellen, their only child, had none of the advantages of education, but she had a strong, masculine mind, and made up in boldness what she lacked in information. Soon after the marriage of the happy couple, the parents of the young wife set her up in a small fancy store in Division-street, while a room over the store served at once for a parlor for the family, and a workshop for Mr. Simmons, who contrived to get a good share of custom.

"Great oaks from little acorns grow," and so it proved with Mr. and Mrs. Simmons. In due process of time, Mr. Simmons opened a shop for himself, and Mrs. Simmons gave up the fancy store, to lend him a helping hand, and to take care of the two daughters, Maria and Euphemia, who had blessed their union.

The small shop became in time a large one; then it was moved into a more fashionable street, and finally, it was abandoned entirely, Mr. Simmons having gone into the wholesale clothing business, and Mrs. Simmons, whose parents by this time had died, having cut all her old associates, had set up for a fine lady, and suffered no available opportunity to pass without impressing

upon the minds of her daughters, now growing rapidly into womanhood, the necessity of forgetting, as much as they possibly could, by-gone times, and treating with contempt all who were poorer than themselves.

They were sent to the most fashionable schools, and Mrs. Simmons, who had sense enough to be fully conscious of her own ignorance, improved herself by taking private lessons from a lady, whose poverty compelled her to humble herself before this haughty, purse-proud woman.

Mr. Simmons, at the time of his introduction to the reader, has amassed a handsome fortune, lives in splendid style, in one of the most fashionable squares in the city, moves in the best circles, gives magnificent entertainments, and no one inquires who he was or whence he sprang, while the same convenient neglect is extended to Mrs. Simmons, to whom the position of a fashionable woman is readily conceded, by those not more wealthy than herself.

The daughters, Maria and Euphemia, are handsome, dashing, fashionable girls—too fashionable entirely, to be of the least possible service to themselves, or to any human being, and too highly accomplished, to be acquainted with any useful branch of general education. They are both marriageable, and both anxious to be well settled, but both think too highly of *birth* and fashion, to unite themselves to any but one moving in the same *rank* of society with themselves. It is hardly necessary to say, that they are heartless, and that there is not the most remote danger of either marrying beneath

them for love, at least so long as fortune continues to shower her favors upon them.

The reader must not deem that I have been too severe in exhibiting this family in their true aspects. They are seen now in all the pomp and pride of wealth and station, and accredited birth; and they will be seen again, moving in another, and, perhaps, more appropriate sphere.

Mr. Simmons was the original owner of the house in which Mr. Elliott had resided, he having purchased it from him; and he it was who had repurchased it, at a price barely covering his own mortgage, congratulating himself upon having made so excellent a bargain, but never for a moment casting a thought upon the widow and her orphan daughters, who were so suddenly reduced from comparative comfort to a bare subsistence, through his instrumentality.

During the lifetime of Mr. Elliott, he had always, when they met, treated him with respect; for even he could not deny that Mr. Elliott was worthy of it; but he knew of no consideration which called upon him to extend the same civility to the poor widow and her daughters, who, in days of old, he had so often noticed as "beautiful and truly interesting girls." Death had severed all connection with them, and they were entirely forgotten by him, except when he chanced to pass the house they had formerly owned, but which, having reverted to himself, was now let to another family, producing him a handsome investment for his money.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. ELLIOTT and her daughters were comfortably situated, in small but neatly furnished apartments, in one of the streets on the eastern side of the city. They felt the necessity of practicing the strictest economy, and had accordingly disposed of all their furniture, except such as was necessary for the rooms they had taken. The money realized from this, though small in amount, added to the trifle left over from the sale of the house, was sufficient to keep them for a short time, until some definite plan could be laid out for the future, or until the girls could secure employment of some kind; for they were fully aware that they must now rely entirely upon their own industry.

In a short time, the violence of their grief for the death of the husband and father, wore away; and though they never ceased to mourn him, they never permitted their sorrow for the dead so far to overcome them, as to neglect the ordinary and necessary duties and responsibilities of life.

Mrs. Elliott was the first to urge the necessity of their seeking work, and Laura was dispatched to the wholesale clothing establishment of Mr. Simmons, in Pearl-

street, to procure such work as she could do; and provision was made for Clara, by having a small tin sign fastened on the front door, signifying that "dress-making" was performed within.

Laura was received by Mr. Simmons with a coldness and haughtiness, which rendered her painfully sensible of the difference in their situations—for he had ever, during her father's lifetime, treated her with marked courtesy and kindness. On preferring her request, that he would furnish her with work, he replied, very coldly:

"I never trouble myself with that part of the business. My foreman, there, will give it out, if he has any. Mr. Jones," he added, turning to the individual alluded to as his foreman, "if you have anything ready, you may give it to this young woman," and he immediately moved away, to attend upon some customers who entered the store at that moment.

Laura turned to the foreman, a sleek, fashionably-dressed young man, highly perfumed, and wearing a formidable pair of well-curled whiskers, which seemed to be the object of his especial care and attention.

He eyed her with a look, which she wished not to interpret into impertinence, for a few moments, and then asked, in very mild tones, if she had any choice of work.

"None whatever; anything he chose to give out, she would make up," was the reply, coldly but civilly given.

Calling a boy, who was in another part of the store, he whispered some directions to him, which he proceeded to obey, and meanwhile he essayed to open a conver-

sation with Laura. She was, however, obstinately silent, replying only in monosyllables; so he set her down for a fool, and thrusting a bundle at her, which the boy had brought to him, he said, as he handed her a little book :

“Here is a book to keep your accounts. We pay off every fortnight, deducting always for bad work.”

Laura took the huge bundle with a heavy heart, but she gladly made her escape from a place where she was so rudely treated, and hurried homeward, determined, however, to say nothing of the vexations and impertinences to which she had been subjected, as she knew it would only cause pain to her mother and sister.

When she reached home, she opened the bundle, which she found to contain six pair of coarse satinet pantaloons. She had not the most remote idea how much she was to receive for making them, but very foolishly considered that the remuneration would bear something like a proportion to the amount of work to be performed, and the time it would consume. Convinced in her own mind of this, she commenced her work with a cheerfulness which was worthy of imitation when her situation was considered.

As for Clara, her prospects looked really encouraging. Her sign was scarcely dry, before she was waited upon by a couple of dashy, showy girls, who wished her to make up some dresses for them at their own residence; and they left the street and number, on receiving Clara's promise to be punctual in her attendance on the following day.

Having partaken of an early breakfast, she started off, with a light and happy heart—as light and happy, at least, as her recent loss would permit—(for she felt a pride in the thought, that she might be able to support herself)—and rejoicing in the good fortune which had befallen her, in thus procuring work, at the first onset of her career. When she reached the house, she rang the bell, and the summons was answered by one of her visitors of the previous day, who conducted her into a back room, where her companion was seated. The material of which the dress was to be made up was brought out, and after Clara had been called on to admire and praise its beauty, the work was commenced, and the time passed on very pleasantly until the shades of night drew on, when she started for home, promising to return the following day, and finish the dress she had been making, and another one, also, which they wished to have made up.

When the family were seated around the frugal table set for their evening meal, and after the blessing of God had been invoked upon it, the conversation naturally verged toward the occurrences of the day. Laura glossed over her share of the proceedings, as well, perhaps, to hide her own mortification at the manner of her reception by Mr. Simmons, from whom she had expected, at least, civility, as to avoid narrating that which she knew would cause her mother and sister unhappiness.

Clara, however, was all life and happiness. “Six shillings to-day, mother, and six more to-morrow, is a pretty good beginning. Don’t you think it is, Laura?”

Laura assented, and sighed as she wondered if she had

made the same amount. She knew she had earned it, but whether she would receive that much, was something yet to be ascertained.

"Six shillings a day, makes thirty-six shillings a week—four dollars and a half—and four dollars and a half for you, Laura, make nine dollars a week; and if we can continue at that rate, dear mother here need not do anything but tend the house."

"Ah, Clara, you build very pretty castles, but I am afraid you do not make very good calculations," said her mother, rather seriously. "You have not made allowances for the days you must be without work—nor for sickness, which you know we are all liable to suffer—nor for the carelessness, to call it by no harsher word, of those who forget to pay the trifle which you must earn by such hard labor."

"Ah! but, mother," said Clara, smiling, "I don't mean to sew for any but those who pay promptly. I should like to get Miss Simmons' dresses to make. It would be a good thing for me to get such custom as that; it would make me known, and then I should never want work."

"But, my daughter, do you look forward ever to a life of toil?" inquired Mrs. Elliott, with earnestness.

"Mother," said Clara, seriously, "what else do I dare look for? We are poor, and must work; and though, I confess, it is not pleasant to look forward to a life spent in toil, day after day, with nothing to cheer or comfort one, it is better to meet even that with cheerfulness, and

make the most of it, than to sigh and pine over our misfortunes ; for I am sure, crying or pining won't better our situation."

"That is very true, my dear, and I am glad to see you resigned to your fate—for fate, I fear, I must now call it, as I certainly look for no change for the better, unless, indeed, some worthy man should marry one of my girls, and perhaps, for the daughter's sake, he would give the mother a shelter."

"Oh, mother, dear mother," exclaimed both of her daughters at once, "we will never leave nor forsake you. You will always have the first place in our hearts, and we hope always to be worthy of the same in your own."

"Who on earth," said Laura, gaily, "would marry a poor girl now-a-days ? Marry, indeed ! I hope, mother, you will live to see us both married ; you will reach a ripe old age, I promise you," and she broke into a merry laugh.

"Come, come, Laura," said Clara, "there's many a true word spoken in jest, so let us drop marriage, and talk of something more interesting, certainly more important. I had made out just now a clear income of nearly five hundred dollars, when you interrupted me. I am sure we can live in comfort on that."

"Yes ; but, Clara, you are counting my work the same as your own. I have no idea what I am to receive for these pantaloons," said Laura.

"Receive ! why a dollar a pair, at least. They are coarse common stuff, and I don't suppose they are worth

much more than a dollar a pair for making, and you know we cannot expect to get the full value for them. I have no doubt you will get a dollar a pair, and you can make, let me see, how many pairs a week?"

"I don't know; it is rather heavy work, and I can tell better when these are done; and when I carry them home, we can make our calculations with more accuracy, for I shall then know how much I shall be paid. You know Mr. Simmons only pays every fortnight, at least so the foreman told me."

"For my part," said Clara, "as soon as I have finished the dresses for these ladies, I mean to try and let the Misses Simmons know that I take in dress-making. Who knows but they may give me work, for father's sake, and if I can once get the custom of their friends, I may consider myself made."

Laura said nothing, but she thought to herself, that if the daughters resembled the father, Clara's chances of sympathy or work, for the sake of their dear father, were very slender. She did not wish to discourage or dishearten her, however, so she kept her thoughts to herself, and merely nodded assent.

Early on the following morning, Clara repaired to the house where she had passed the previous day, and she sewed so steadily and rapidly, that by night she had completed all the work they had for her, and had *earned* her twelve shillings.

As she was putting on her hat and shawl to return home, one of the girls said to her:

"You need not wait for the money now; father will

not be home until late, and we will send it to you in the morning."

Clara would much have preferred to receive the money at once, as she had made great calculations on being able to exhibit her first earnings to her mother and sister; but seeing no way to avoid the delay, she thanked them, and left for home.

It was past her usual hour, and the tea-table had been kept for her; for they could not think of sitting down without her. As she entered the room, her mother saw, from the expression of her countenance, that something was wrong, and could not forbear asking her what had occurred.

"Why, mother, to tell you the truth," said Clara, "I was grievously disappointed this evening, in not receiving my money. I had anticipated so much pleasure in presenting to you my first earnings, that the disappointment affected me more seriously than so trifling an occurrence ought to have done."

"Ah! my dear," replied Mrs. Elliott, shaking her head sadly, "this, I fear, is but the first of our trials. I have no doubt you will eventually receive your money, but those who employ are too apt, in the remembrance of their own comforts, to forget the necessities of those who are compelled to toil for them."

"Well, well, Clara," said Laura, encouragingly, "don't be disheartened. A bad beginning, you know, sometimes makes a very good end; and if you should get work from the Misses Simmons, you will, at least, be sure of your pay when it is done."

"Come, come, girls," exclaimed Mrs. Elliott, anxious to dispel the clouds cast over them, "don't think of this; it is too trifling an occurrence to affect us so much. Let us confide in God, and all will yet be well. Laura here has been at work, steadily, since you left the house, and has only finished one pair of the pantaloons. I fear she will have to sew much faster, if she hopes to earn her own living, or Mr. Simmons will have to pay a larger price than we anticipate."

A few words more of encouragement from the affectionate mother, and the disappointments of the day were forgotten.

After tea, Laura resumed her work, while Clara seated herself, and penned a very polite note to the Misses Simmons, informing them that she had commenced dress-making, and would thankfully receive any work they might have for her, either at her house or their own. This she took herself, and delivered it to the servant at the door, returning home full of the most pleasing anticipations—so full, indeed, that she actually forgot for the moment the twelve shillings which she had earned with such hard labor, and which she had not yet received.

Laura continued at her work until all the family had retired to rest, notwithstanding the remonstrances of her mother and sister; for she was determined to earn her share of the week's income, and she felt the necessity of completing, if possible, the whole six pair of pantaloons during the week, although it was now Wednesday evening. To accomplish this, she must work early and

late, commencing her day's toil at early dawn, and closing only when nature, almost exhausted, demanded repose in sleep.



CHAPTER IV.

THE party given by Mrs. Simmons was all that she anticipated. Her rooms were crowded almost to suffocation, and at every step she was stopped by some *kind friend*, who insisted upon assuring her how very agreeable they found everything, and how magnificent were all the arrangements.

Misses Euphemia and Maria were, of course, the magnets of the evening, and their superabundant vanity was flattered to a surfeit, by the immoderate amount of attention paid to them, and the thousand flattering speeches poured into their willing ears.

In the course of the evening, some one of the guests, during a casual conversation, mentioned that an effort was then in progress, on the part of some philanthropists, for the amelioration of the condition of the poor. This was a subject upon which Mr. Simmons was peculiarly at home, as he was well known for the extent of his donations to very many charitable institutions, the due acknowledgment of which always appeared monthly in one of the city papers, most widely circulated.

"There is," said Mr. Simmons, "entirely too much said about the poor, and an improper sympathy is ex-

cited in behalf of a very large class, who not only do not thank us for it, but who do not deserve the half of it."

"And yet," said the gentleman who started the conversation, "I have seen a vast deal of suffering among those who are least thought of among our citizens, I mean the seamstresses. Now, I have seen a mother and daughter working at tailors' work from daylight until midnight, to earn three or four shillings a day, and that was to feed five mouths, and clothe five human bodies, besides paying for house-rent and fire, and other necessities."

"Yes," replied Mr. Simmons, elevating himself with conscious pride, and speaking in tones louder than common, "that may be the case with some establishments, but in mine I always pay such prices as insures to honest industry a fair reward," and he looked around the room, as if to say, who dared to doubt him.

"I am glad to hear it," was the response, "for there are some who scruple not to oppress and beat down the poor girls who are compelled to work for them, until they are only preserved from actual starvation by efforts which neither you nor I could think we could make, under any possible circumstances."

As Mr. Simmons had made this assertion before a large number of people, it is but fair to infer that he thought it true, and I have only narrated this brief conversation—for much more of a similar nature occurred—to show how erroneous are the ideas entertained on the part of some of the condition of this class of our

population. Let us see how the facts stand ; and for that purpose let us return to Laura Elliott.

The week has closed, and a weary week it has been to her—a week of ceaseless, arduous toil ; for she has endeavored, if possible, to work so as to earn as much as her sister. By devoting to her work many of the hours which exhausted nature demanded for repose, she has managed to finish in five days four pair of the pantaloons, out of the six which had been given out.

Tying them up in a bundle, and taking her shop-book with her, she proceeded, on Saturday, just before dusk, to Mr. Simmons' warehouse, where she met a great number of females, assembled for the same purpose as herself, viz., to return their work. The sight of so many pale and anxious countenances affected her deeply, and she wondered within herself what could cause such a general appearance of melancholy upon the countenances of all, young and old, alike. She saw there, the mother of a large family, thin, pale, and apparently ill able to sustain the large bundle she was holding, patiently awaiting her turn to have the foreman set down the amount due to her in the shop-book. She saw the young girl, too, who had scarce reached the morn of youth, and whose days ought to have been passed in cheerful serenity, careworn, sad, and almost exhausted. In vain she looked around for one happy, smiling face: not one was there to greet her eye, and she turned away from the spirit-broken group with a sinking heart.

One by one they were attended to, and at length her

turn came. Trembling with anxiety, to learn how much she had *earned*, she placed her bundle on the counter, and handed the book to the scented fop who stood behind it, and she watched him with fearful eagerness, as he examined her work. It appeared to satisfy him, for, laying it aside, he took the pen, which was placed behind his ear, half-buried in his flowing, well-oiled locks, and making an entry in her book, handed it to her, without saying a word, and extending his hand for the next one in turn.

Laura did not look at the entry which had been made in the book, in the store, but hurried home, and before taking off any of her things, she went to the light, and opening the book with trembling eagerness, read it. The entry stood thus:

Four pairs coarse pant's, - - - - - \$1,25

The book fell from her hands, and she burst into an agony of tears. Five days and nights of ceaseless toil for the miserable pittance of ten shillings! She could not, she would not believe it, and when she had somewhat recovered from the feelings into which the reading of the entry had at first thrown her, she took up the book again, with the thought it might possibly mean that it was ten shillings per pair. That idea she soon abandoned, however, as preposterous, and another burst of tears afforded some relief to her overcharged heart.

"Ten shillings for five days and nights of such work as I have done!" she inwardly exclaimed. "Oh man, thou guardian and protector of our sex, how faithfully do ye fulfil your trust!"

The entrance of her mother and sister at that moment, interrupted her train of thought, and with a bitter smile, she handed to them the book.

“Good Heaven!” exclaimed Mrs. Elliott; “why we shall starve at that rate.”

“Well, mother,” said Laura, despondingly, “and who is there to care if we do? We are now only poor seamstresses, and so long as we can work—so long as we have health and strength to use a needle, I dare say we can get employment sufficient to buy dry bread, and that is good enough for us.”

Clara’s heart was too full for words. Deeply did she sympathize with her sister, for she had herself that day received a severe check to her happy anticipations. After going day after day for the twelve shillings she had earned, she was at last told, and in no very gentle terms, that her dunning was impertinent, and if it was repeated, she might look for her money where she could find it; it would be sent to her when it was convenient for them to pay it, and she need give herself no further trouble.

“Now,” said Laura, with bitterness, after Clara had related her disappointment, “if it had been a man who had treated you in that manner, I would not have wondered; but I must confess I did expect more sympathy from our own sex. However, we are poor, and must bear it, and so make the best of it; and now, what *shall* we do? I cannot, at this rate, make, at the most, more than fifteen shillings a week, and to do that, I must work day and night, and my health would soon break under it. Let

me see," she added, "that, at the rate I have worked—fourteen hours each day—is *two and a quarter cents* an hour!"

"You must finish, Laura," said her mother, "the remaining two pairs of pantaloons, and when you take them back, ask the foreman for lighter work. It is very evident, your health cannot long stand such toil. Even if you make no more money by the change than you can now, the labor may not be so severe; and you, Clara, I fear your dress-making does not promise very auspicious results. However, it will not do to be discouraged so soon. You *may* fall in with honest people, who will not feel insulted if a poor girl should ask for her hard-earned money."

"Give up! no indeed," said Clara, rallying, and es-saying to be gay. "I hope yet to see my name in *very* large letters on some large house in Broadway—'Madame Elliotte, from Paris.' You know it would not do to be Miss Elliott, so I put Madame, and then I convert myself into a French woman, by the simple addition of the letter *e*. Nothing is easier."

"Yes, very easy to fancy, my dear; and although it is practiced every day, I feel that you will never reach that point. However, I wish you success, and a full realization of your anticipations."

At this moment the family were startled by a rap at the door, which, on being opened, admitted a servant of Mr. Simmons, who brought a message for Miss Elliott to come to the house on Monday morning, to assist

a dress-maker for the week, as they were going to have some dresses made up for a summer's jaunt.

Clara could scarcely restrain her joy as the servant delivered his message, and as soon as he was out of sight and hearing, she danced about the room, in the exuberance of her joy.

"There, mother, my fortune, and yours, too, is made. I have felt all along, if I could only get work from the Misses Simmons, it would make me known in such a set, that I must succeed. Oh, how truly thankful I am. Dear Laura, why don't you give up such kind of work, and learn dress-making? I will teach you; you can make a great deal more, and the work is not so hard."

"Thank you, dear," said Laura, sadly. "My taste is not so good as yours, and I fear I never could be a good dress-maker. I will try and procure lighter work, and I may do better at that."

Clara was thrown into such a joyous state by the message from the Misses Simmons, that she forgot her twelve shillings, and all the hard feelings the disappointment had occasioned; and she strove so hard to inspire her mother and sister with cheerfulness, that she succeeded at length, and the remainder of the evening was passed in joyful anticipations of the future.

The next day, the sabbath, as was their invariable custom, they went to the house of God, and unlike very many females, they went in season. They had no new hats or dresses to exhibit; and even had they been so fortunate as to possess such cherished and attractive

articles, it is due to them to say, they never would have chosen such a place for their exhibition. They were in their places early, and not a little were they shocked, to find that a very great portion of the female part of the congregation—those who were seated at the greatest distance from the preacher, and who, in consequence, had the greatest distance to walk in the face of those already assembled—did not reach the sacred temple until the services were well commenced. They very charitably inferred that some domestic calamity had detained them so late, and never in their hearts for a moment attributed it to the love of display, at the sacrifice even of propriety.

The services of the day were listened to by Mrs. Elliott and her daughters with attention, and the admonitions of the preacher received with respect, while in the fervor and devotion with which they joined in the prayers, they derived a cheerfulness of spirit, and serenity of mind, which they knew and felt it was vain to look for elsewhere than from religion.

The day was passed by them as Christians should pass it, and at night they retired to their humble couches, with hearts at peace with God and man, and with their hope, trust and confidence more firmly fixed on, and more trustfully placed in, the Great Disposer of events.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY on Monday morning, Clara proceeded to the splendid mansion of Mr. Simmons, and was at once set at work by a fashionable dress-maker, whom she found already there, and who had succeeded in gaining that stand, and the custom of a certain fashionable set, which was the present height of Clara's ambition. It is true, the Misses Simmons paid no more attention to her, than if she had not been in the room, except to give, occasionally, in very positive tones, directions respecting the work, and to interrupt her very frequently, by requiring her to show them the particular mode of doing certain things.

Their conversation was particularly directed to *the* dress-maker, who seemed to know a little of everything, and everybody's business; and Clara heard there the history of several families, of whom she had before known, painted in colors by no means flattering, if half told of them was true; and she was innocent enough to suppose that they would not have ventured to use such language in reference to them, unless the remarks were true.

Poor Laura, who was dreadfully disheartened, resumed her cheerless work, endeavoring to console herself with the reflection, that the next work she would procure should be more easy, and she trusted, more profitable. By working with great assiduity, she completed the remaining two pairs of pantaloons so as to carry them to the store on Tuesday, toward the close of the day ; and after they had been examined, and the entry made in the book, she ventured to ask, if he could not give her work which was not so heavy, as she found her health and strength unequal to her present task.

The foreman stared at her for an instant, with much the same look as Bumble, the beadle, gave to Oliver Twist, when he dared to ask for *more*, and was on the point of making some impudent reply, when he checked himself, and with a smile, which he intended to be fascinating, said :

“ Why, yes, I will try. Can you make vests ? ”

“ Oh yes, sir,” replied Laura, with something of eagerness in her manner, for she had made them for her father in bygone years—“ Oh yes, sir ; and I should prefer them much to such heavy work as those pantaloons.”

“ Well, I will give you half-a-dozen vests. We pay two shillings and sixpence for them—the same as the pantaloons.”

Again Laura’s heart sank within her. However, she had asked for the vests, and must take them ; so she received in silence the bundle which he handed her, saying, at the same time :

"We are very much hurried now, and I wish you to finish them as speedily as possible."

Laura promised to do her best, and started homeward, with depressed spirits, for she feared that, with all her industry, she could not earn more than she would have done by continuing upon the coarse pantaloons, nor at the expense of less time or labor, although the work would not be so heavy, nor would it tax her health and strength so much as sewing on the pantaloons.

On her way home she met a young girl, whose face was familiar to her, carrying a bundle also, and she accosted her, asking if they had not met before.

The girl replied that her name was Edwards, and reminded Laura that she had lived a near neighbor to her before the death of Mr. Elliott.

Laura remembered her then, as a girl who was employed sewing on caps, and she had often felt her pity excited when she passed the house where she resided, as she observed her always seated near the window at work.

Misery loves company, and Laura, hoping to derive some information from her which might prove of service to herself, invited her to call upon them some evening, giving her at the same time her own address.

"I will come," replied Miss Edwards, "if you will let me bring my work with me, for I cannot waste an hour for myself or my friends."

"Certainly," replied Laura, and a tear started to her eyes, as she reflected upon the similarity of their situations; for she too dared not to *waste* an hour for

anything, no matter how pleasant or attractive it might prove.

When she reached her home, Laura threw her bundle on the bed, and gave way to a hearty burst of tears, which was perhaps excusable when it is considered that her health already began to decline under the effects of her dreadful overtasking, and that she was more than usually excitable and nervous.

"What is the matter, Laura?" inquired her mother, who having been out in search of work, entered the room at that moment, and found Laura in tears. "You must not give way to these fits of despondency; it is unworthy of you as a Christian."

"I know it, mother," sobbed Laura, "but I cannot look at the dreary prospect before me with a smile. I see nothing but a life of gloomy wretchedness—days and nights of ceaseless, ill-requited toil, which must affect my health; and for what?—why, perhaps, for two or three shillings each day—just enough to keep starvation from the door. Dear mother, is it not enough to make me sad?"

"True, my dear child; but you know that cheerfulness takes away half the tedium of labor. Remember the Bible teaches us that whatever we have to do, we should perform with zeal and diligence, and also with a cheerful disposition. It is wrong to give way to these gloomy forebodings: 'Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof.'"

"Well, mother, I will try and be more cheerful, if it is only for your sake," and Laura wiped her eyes, until they were red and swollen.

"See here, Laura," said her mother, untying her bundle; "look at the work I have procured, and see if I too have no cause to grieve. See, here are two dozen shirts, coarse it is true, but what do you suppose I am to receive for making them?"

Laura looked at the shirts, and made a calculation in her mind how long it would take to make one. After a brief pause, she replied:

"I suppose about three shillings—or no, say two and sixpence."

Mrs. Elliott smiled, but it was a smile full of bitterness, as she replied:

"*Ten cents!* Laura."

"Good Heaven! mother, you cannot be in earnest? Ten cents for making a shirt! Oh, surely, you are jesting?"

"Daughter, I wish it were so. Ten cents each I am to receive for making these shirts; and judge now if you have much greater cause to complain than myself, and yet you see I do not weep, or take on, as you did just now."

"Forgive me, mother, I will never murmur again; but oh! what hearts must they have to expect such work from poor weak females for such a miserable sum. Can they have hearts or feelings?"

"Dear Laura, I went to a dozen places before I could get any at all, and nearly every one I asked, paid only eight cents. The man who let me have these, prides himself upon paying the highest prices, and delights to

hear it said that the females in his employ cannot complain of him on that score."

"And how many can you make in a day?" asked Laura.

"I have never made this kind of shirts, but as they are coarse, I suppose I can make two at first, and when I am more accustomed to them, perhaps three a day."

"Thirty cents a day!" sighed Laura; "and suppose any of us is taken sick—and I am sure we cannot stand this work long, and keep our health—what can we do?"

"Again, Laura, I must remind you that 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,'" was the reply of the Christian mother. "You think we are badly off, my dear; but when the time comes, and it may to us, as well as others, that we can obtain no work at all, you will grieve to think that you have murmured or complained because of our present situation. You remember Mrs. Hammond—do you not, my dear? Her husband died, and left her with three little children, perfectly destitute."

"Yes, I remember her perfectly well," was the reply.

"Well, as I was returning home with my bundle, I met her, but she looked so pale and haggard, and was so altered, I never should have recognized her. She remembered me, however, and spoke to me. She told me she had been out of *all work* for nearly three months! Occasionally she had managed to get some shirts to make, at five cents each!"

"Oh, mother, five cents!" interrupted Laura, deprecatingly.

"Yes, my child, five cents, and she was glad to get them at that, to keep actual starvation away from herself and her little ones. It seems that many of those who manufacture, or rather sell shirts, and the like, have a great stock made up during the winter season by girls in the country, farmers' daughters, who having no particular duties to perform at that season, willingly make up these coarse shirts for four and five cents a piece; and thus those who are compelled to make them for a living, must work as cheaply, or get no work at all. She told me that for the past week, she had lived on potatoes alone, which she had procured from the Alms-House, cooking them with chips, which she was allowed to pick up around the carpenters' shops and ship-yards. One of her children has been sick for some weeks, and is actually pining away for want of the common necessities of life.

"She has a little room at the farthest extremity of a dark alley, and the only furniture she owns in the world, is an old kettle, in which she cooks her potatoes. Everything else, even to her clothing, she has been obliged to part with, to keep starvation away yet a little longer; and her bed for herself and children is made of a few old garments, which she could not sell; her pillow, a stick of wood! And this woman has seen better days, as well as ourselves. Oh, my daughter, you must not give way so readily to these fits of despondency."

"Well, mother, I will not complain any more; but it is very plain, that if we intend to live by our needles, we must think of nothing else. Thank Heaven, there

is one day of rest, and live or die," added Laura, with energy, "I will never desecrate that. But it is a sad thing to contemplate: Here we must remain—ever confined—ever at work—denied all social intercourse—forbidden even the necessary enjoyment and relaxation of exercise—shut out from the world, with nothing to look for in the future but a life of dreary toil, or a death in the Alms-House. I wonder," she added, suddenly, as if a new thought had struck her, "if the employers know how hard we *do* work? I almost feel that if they did, they would do something for us. It seems to me they would pay something like a fair compensation, if they could but realize the time and labor consumed in earning the miserable pittance they now pay. What would they think, were they compelled, as we are, to work for two, or at the very utmost, three cents, an hour, and from twelve to sixteen hours each day? *I will* think they do not properly estimate our work, or they would mete to us, at least, the semblance of justice."

"Hush, hush, Laura," said her mother; "when you are older, and have seen a few more of the ways of men, and the world, you will be wiser than to indulge in such foolish ideas. Come, we must go to work, and be thankful that we can earn a subsistence at all. The employers, you may rest assured, will never voluntarily take any steps to amend our condition, from the fear that it would operate against their profits."

Mother and daughter commenced their tasks. At first, they chatted in tones of cheerfulness, but gradually they ceased, and their work was carried on in silence, inter-

rupted only by the occasional rustling of the garments through which they plied their needles.

Clara did not return from the Misses Simmons until after eight o'clock, and then all work was laid aside, to prepare their frugal evening meal.

"Well, Clara," said Laura to her sister, as they were laying the table, "I hope all your anticipations have been realized at Mr. Simmons's."

"Laura," said Clara, pausing in her work, "I would rather be Clara Elliott, the poor dress-maker, than to be Miss Simmons, with all her wealth, and all her pride and heartlessness."

"Oh, I expected as much," was the reply. "But how do you like the idea of working for them, and do you still think their custom will be of such service as you expected?"

"As to that, I cannot yet say, for they have paid no more attention to me than if I had been a cat or a dog; and I have heard things to-day, which I want to forget as soon as possible. I am thankful for their work, and shall be thankful for my money, when I receive it; so let us say no more at present of the Misses Simmons."

After the evening meal was concluded, Mrs. Elliott exhibited to Clara the work she had obtained, and stated the price she was to receive for it; but she neither manifested nor expressed any surprise.

"I am sure, mother, that is quite enough for a coarse shirt; for how can the employers make money if they pay more? No, no, ten cents is a good price. But if—

no, I won't say what I was going to: it was wicked. Come, let me help you, mother, or you Laura."

"No, dear; you have been at work all day, and need rest."

"Well, and have you not toiled all day, too, I should like to know, and who has a better right to help you than I have? So, give me some work—I can't bear to be idle."

"God forgive me for murmuring," said Laura, as she looked at her sister. "I was wicked to-day, Clara, and cried myself almost sick; but I will never do so again. I will follow your example, and make the best of it."

"How much do you get for making those vests, Laura?"

"Two shillings and sixpence."

"Well, I suppose that is enough for them," said Clara, in the same sarcastic tone in which she had spoken of the shirts. "Mr. Simmons, I dare say, tells everybody he gives a dollar apiece for making them, and everybody believes him. Oh, he is a noble, generous man! I wonder what his daughters would say, if they should ever come down to making shirts at ten cents, pantaloons at two shillings and sixpence, and vests at the same exorbitant price? Such a thing may happen."

"Hush, hush, Clara," said her mother; "you speak as if you almost wished it."

"Well, and so I do, and may God forgive me for it. When I see wealth united to such pride, haughtiness and heartlessness, I think it but just that they should suffer some. If the wealthy only knew one half the sufferings

of those who toil to make them rich, and had any hearts, do you suppose they could not amend our condition? They are the only ones who can do it."

"How, my dear," asked Mrs. Elliott, "could they improve our condition?"

"By placing the addition to the price of the article, instead of deducting it from the earnings of the toil-worn seamstress. Dou you suppose there is a man living, possessing the ordinary feelings of our nature, who would not cheerfully pay a shilling or two more, if it was required, for a shirt, or vest, or any other garment, if he knew the money he paid went to remunerate the poor seamstress, who is compelled to subsist—for I don't call it living—on two or three shillings a day, at the very utmost—and even that miserable pittance earned by the most unceasing drudgery ?"

"That is very good theory, Clara; but most employers prefer to undersell their neighbors, even though in order to do it, they must make up the difference to themselves from the hard-earned wages of the seamstress. No, no, my dear, you must change human nature first, and then you may hope to see justice done to those situated like ourselves."

"But surely, mother, it does not require that man's nature should be changed, in order that we should receive justice at his hands? It is my firm belief, that many of those who employ seamstresses, are utterly ignorant of the extent of their labors, and the inadequacy of the compensation; and perhaps they are fixed in the belief, that they have no cause for complaint, for the

posit. synth. nature
consummation

not profit - suffering, rational, even more

simple reason, (that they do not complain.) But I will not harbor so poor an opinion of human nature yet."

"Well, my dear, you will learn ere long, I fear, that you must entertain such opinions. But come, let us drop this subject. It only renders us unhappy and discontented."

CHAPTER VI.

ON the evening of Wednesday in the same week, Miss Edwards, the young girl who had been met in the street and recognised by Laura, paid her promised visit ; and, as she had said, brought her work with her, in order that she might lose no time.

"I suppose," said Laura, as their visitor entered their humbly furnished room, "I need make no apology for the appearance of our room. All of our time is occupied with our work, and had we any to spare, I see no prospect at present of our earning sufficient to procure any thing further than the common necessities of life.

"Truly, you need make none," said Miss Edwards. "I have been compelled to toil with my needle for my subsistence for years, and the most unceasing efforts on my part, have not enabled me to lay by a single dollar for emergencies. I am, as I must needs be, content to subsist, not live, and I never, if I can possibly avoid it, suffer myself to anticipate consequences, or to look to the future."

"You have one advantage over us," said Clara.

"You have learned your lessons, bitter though they may have been—ours are yet to come. I fear we have hard tasks before us."

"I have no desire, I assure you, to discourage you, or say any thing to dishearten you, but you have indeed much that is unpleasant yet to learn—if, as Miss Laura has said, you rely upon your industry entirely for your living. Mine has been a bitter experience, dearly bought, although it profits me but little."

"Come, come, Louisa," said Mrs. Elliott, "let us have the benefit of your experience. It may serve us much hereafter: and though it is prying into your confidence, perhaps the necessity which urges us to ask it, may prove a sufficient apology for the liberty."

"I will very cheerfully do so, and not think it any liberty in asking," was the reply. "Mine, however, is an every-day story, but there are few who will believe it to be so; and few I fear who can be found to believe it true; and very few are there who pass me in the streets, as I go to and from my house to the shop for which I work, who would believe that I toil fourteen hours every day for less than three shillings. Ay, and I have worked more hours for less money, and have been cheated out of that at last."

"Do, that's a good girl," said Clara, whose interest began to be awakened; "do tell us all about yourself. I have often noticed you in your window, sewing away so steadily and so cheerfully, I have set you down as a wonderfully industrious girl."

"You are not wrong there," said Louisa, laughing.

"But I make a virtue out of necessity—or rather necessity impels me to the practice of industry—without it, I should starve. But, to gratify you, I will, if you wish to hear it, give you the benefit of all my experience, and at the risk of discouraging you, will tell you all I have suffered and the impositions practiced on me. I suppose, though, you don't care for hearing of my earlier days; for they can interest no person but myself."

"You are much mistaken there," said Mrs. Elliott; "we should much like to hear all you choose to relate. We may, from even your experience, derive lessons which may prove useful to us."

"It will recall many painful occurrences to me," replied Miss Edwards; "but I have no right to check them, as the narration of them may serve as a warning to you, and may save you from being defrauded, as I have been."

"It is hardly necessary, and would only tire you, to relate any thing concerning my girlish days; I will, therefore, commence at the period when my father died.

"You may not remember my father," she continued, "but he was an old friend of Mr. Elliott, and their friendship continued firm and unchanged for many years. Soon after the death of my poor dear mother, it seemed as if every thing went wrong with father. First, he lost his situation in the shop where he had worked ever since he was out of his time, and then his health began to fail, and in less than a year from the

time my mother was laid in her grave, he was laid by her side, and I was left alone in the world. I was then only fourteen years old, and not very well calculated, I assure you, to take care of myself—for I had been rather too much petted to be very useful. However, Providence threw me in the way of a kind friend, who was too poor to be of any service to me, except by her advice and example, both of which were founded on purely Christian principles, and both of which she freely bestowed upon me. She was a seamstress, and worked on the clothing made up in what are termed slop shops; but I won't discourage you by telling now what she earned, and how hard she worked.

“Of course, I had to do something for my own support, and as she left it to me to make a selection of a trade, I chose cap making, as I thought it would be the easiest for me; and one day having observed an advertisement in one of the penny papers of a man who wanted thirty or forty hands to *learn the trade of cap making*, I thought it would be a good chance for me, for a man who employed so many hands must do a large business, and would ensure steady work, especially to those who learned the trade with him.

“I went down town, as directed by the advertisement, and, on entering the shop, found about twenty or thirty girls, of all ages, waiting for the same purpose which had brought me there. The proprietor of the establishment was a little keen-eyed man, very Jewish in his appearance, but wonderfully polite to every one. He made very few objections to any of the girls, but re-

quired all of them to walk up-stairs, where the forewoman would instruct them. There were several among them who had worked at the business in other establishments, but none of these suited him, as he said he had plenty who knew the business, and wished only those who desired to learn the trade. I was, of course, accepted, and was, with the rest sent up-stairs to commence at once.

"I found myself in a large room, around which were placed a great number of wooden chairs, nearly all of which were occupied, and having taken off my things, I prepared to take my first lesson in cap making. The forewoman was a hard-featured old maid, cross and sour as vinegar, but admirably suited for the government of so great a number of mischievous girls. I was not suffered to remain idle very long, as she soon placed some work in my hands, and gave me such directions, I could not well make any mistakes. Every few minutes she would go around the room, looking over the girls as they worked, and finding fault with almost every thing. I got along uncommonly well, however, and only had one scolding the whole day.

"I found the work easy, and was pleased that I had chosen to learn this trade in preference to any other, for I was a very fast sewer, and felt sure that, once acquainted with the business, I could earn as much as any one in the shop, besides that I had heard of several girls who could make as much as three dollars a week at it, and that, you know, is large wages for a sewing girl.

"It was not expected, of course, that we should be

paid any thing for our labor until we had learned the trade, so I worked on very cheerfully and industriously, and in about a month I had mastered every branch of it, so far as carried on by the establishment, and congratulated myself that I should not much longer be a burthen to my kind hearted friend, for she had given me food and shelter, such as she had herself, from motives of the purest benevolence.

“ You may guess of the amount of work done in that time by us, when I inform you that there were sixty-three girls at work, each one of whom made from three to ten caps per day ; so that in the month it required to learn the trade, Mr. B * * *, for that was the name of the proprietor, had an immense stock of caps of all kinds made up, and well made too, for every cap not made to suit the forewoman, had to be made over again.

“ Just about the time I was beginning to think we knew the trade well enough to be paid something for our work, Mr. B * * * came up one Saturday afternoon, and in his blindest tones informed us that he had no more work at present—that he was satisfied with all of us, and when business commenced again he would give us the preference, and send for us. He was very sorry that it was so, but he could not help it.

“ This was a stunning blow to all of us, for we had expected to be steadily employed for the remainder of the season, as we had worked so diligently and faithfully to learn the trade.

“ But there was no use of complaining. We had gone to his establishment to learn the trade, and nothing

more. We had learned it, and that was something ; so with heavy hearts, we put on our things and started for our homes.

“ In a day or two afterwards I saw an advertisement similar to the one which had taken me to Mr. B * * *’s, and I thought I would go down and see if I could not get work. I went down ; and, on telling my business, the man behind the counter asked my name and residence, which I gave him readily, thinking myself sure of a situation. My surprise was great, however, when I saw him look at a list he had in his hand, and, after examining it a few moments, he said :

“ We have nothing for you.”

“ I did not know what to make of this, but determined to look on, and see if I could find any clue to it. Soon after another girl, whom I recognised as one who had learned her trade with Mr. B * * * at the same time with myself, made a similar application, and received the same reply, after the list had been examined. Another and another followed, each of whom had worked there, and this let me into the secret. Both these establishments belonged to Mr. B * * *, and the list the man had in his hand, contained the names of those who had learned the trade at the same time with myself.

“ I saw through it at once. These advertisements, of course, brought hundreds of girls to his shop seeking employment, and, under the pretence of teaching them the trade, he kept them at work for a month or six weeks, in which time they could make up a very large stock. By the time they had either learned the trade,

or had began to think they should be paid something, he always managed to get out of work, and, taking down the names and residences of those who had worked there, he discharged them, promising to send for them when he had work. This list he sent to his other establishment, and advertised there for girls to learn the trade; but none who had worked in one shop ever found work in the other. In this manner he managed twice or thrice in each year to get a large stock of caps made up for nothing, at each of his establishments, while the poor girls lived in hope that when the busy season came around again, they would find plenty of work from him."

"Well," interrupted Laura, "if that is not perfectly infamous. I did not think there was so much meanness in existence."

"That is only one plan," rejoined Miss Edwards, half laughing. "I will tell you another for getting a good stock made up for nothing. I went home that day with a heavy heart, and related to my friend the discovery I had made, but she did not seem at all surprised, as she had gone through similar trials herself.

"It was not long before I found another advertisement, headed—'Cap makers wanted on trial,' and this time I felt sure of success. I was a first rate workman, and knew I could make caps as well as any one, so I went to the store named with confidence.

"This man was an unmistakable Jew, and not so civil by half as Mr. B***, but that did not surprise me at all, for I did not expect so much politeness from a man who

was to pay for my work, as from one who received it for nothing. I informed him that I had learned my trade thoroughly, and that I was ready to make a cap or so on trial; but he coolly handed me a large bundle, saying: 'There are two dozen there—if you make them up to suit, I will pay the usual price, if not, I don't give any thing. If you suit I will give you steady work.'

"I felt so sure of satisfying him, I took my heavy bundle and trudged home with a light heart. In a week I had them all done, and well made too, for I had taken especial pains with them, and I started for the store with the certain prospect of receiving the sum I had earned, which was one dollar and a quarter.

"On reaching the store, I opened my bundle with confidence; but imagine my disappointment when he commenced a scrutiny of my work, which at once dampened my hopes. He found more or less fault with every cap, and, without giving me time to say one word in my own defence, he wound up, saying: 'He could not think of paying for such work as that, nor could he trust me with any more, if I could do no better than I had done.' This was a dreadful blow to me, and I fell back from the counter, my eyes filled with tears of bitter disappointment, which I could not suppress, and my heart sad within me."

"In a few minutes another girl came in with her two dozen caps, for each one had that number given to her on trial. The same scrutiny followed—the same faults were found, and the same excuse made for giving no

other
woman

more work. Now this man had given out two dozen caps each to forty-seven girls, all on trial, to be paid for if they suited ; and, out of the whole number, there was not one whose work gave satisfaction, or who received one cent for her labor. So you see he managed to get a nice little stock made up for nothing, and, by repeating this operation three or five times a-year, the labor of making up his caps was not very expensive.

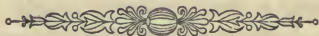
“ Well, I thought I had learned two or three of the worst tricks of that trade, and I was fain to be content with my experience, although it was dearly bought ; but I was yet to learn a little more.

“ Another advertisement for *cap makers* attracted my attention, and this time as they were neither wanted *to learn the trade*, or *on trial*, I indulged a reasonable hope of being able to earn something, and what was more, of being paid.

“ I went to the store, and, without any difficulty, received a large bundle, containing about four dozen caps, for which I was to receive, when made up, one dollar, these being a very common article. I did not much like the looks of the establishment or the proprietor. The store was in a large room on the second floor, entirely unfurnished, except a very long counter, and one or two stools behind it. The proprietor was an easy spoken, civil man, but he did not look much like the personification of honesty, and as I had been deceived twice already, I thought it but fair to be on the look out for the third attempt, so I asked if I should be paid as soon as I brought my work home.

“ ‘Certainly, my dear,’ was the reply. ‘Do you think I would cheat poor girls who have to sew so hard as you do for their living? No, no; short credits make long friends: only do your work well and I will do mine.’

“ Thus re-assured, I started homewards, quite elated with the certainty of earning my own living, and with the sure prospect of prompt payment. I worked faithfully the whole week, and by dint of drawing pretty largely on those hours which ought to have been passed in sleep, I had my whole number finished by Saturday evening, and took them to the shop.”



CHAPTER VII.

"THE proprietor was not there when I went in, but a boy who received the caps, told me he was quite sick at home, and in consequence could not get down to pay the girls off, but would endeavor to come early on Monday morning, and requested all of us to be there before nine o'clock, as he would then pay us for the work we had done, and give out more. This was told to all of us, for we had been urged not to neglect having all the work we took out finished by Saturday night, and I believe every one had done so. I must confess, I felt rather suspicious, but there was no use in saying anything, so I started homeward, but not so light-hearted as when I left it, determined, however, not to entertain any unjust suspicions.

"On Monday morning, I was at the store by eight o'clock, but it was not yet opened, so I waited at the door, and soon the other girls came along, one by one, until upward of thirty were assembled, waiting the arrival of the proprietor. The gentleman who kept the store beneath, came out, after our patience was well nigh exhausted, and after learning the nature of our business,

informed us that the second floor had been rented for one week only, by the man who recently occupied it, and that he had paid his rent and delivered the key to him on Saturday night.

"Thus, for the third time, I was defrauded, and then I felt perfectly wretched. This man would go and hire a vacant store, or a large room, in the business part of the city for a week, generally paying his rent in advance, and bringing no more stock there than he could give out. Then he would advertise for cap-makers, and was sure of procuring from forty to fifty. To each he gave out caps according to the quality and the time it would require to make them up, always urging them to have their work done by Saturday night.

"Thus, by changing about from one street to another, and by having two or three other persons connected with him, who acted at his other stores, (for it would never do for him to be caught twice at the trick,) he could manage, four or five times a year, to have an immense stock made up, *very cheaply too*, he paying nothing but his week's rent. I do not mean to say, that these shameful deceptions are practiced by those who are established in a respectable business, although some of them have various methods of getting from the girls the greatest possible amount of labor, with the least expenditure of money, such, for instance, as paying them in cents, and giving only ninety-six for a dollar.

"These tricks are played by men of no character or reputation, who would not suffer by a public exposure, and who are not established in a regular business; but

the poor girls suffer through them, and that is all from which I wished to warn you.

"I had one or two similar trials afterward, but I was not quite so shamefully defrauded, so I pass them over, as I do not think they would afford you either interest or instruction. But at length I fell in with an honorable employer, for whom I have worked steadily ever since—one who pays as much as any other for the same kind of work, and who has never attempted any of these shameful practices."

"Well," said Laura, who had been deeply attentive while Miss Edwards was narrating this little sketch of the experience she had purchased so dearly, "I did not think there were men with such principles in existence—I mean, men pretending to be men of business. I know that in most cases they beat down the wages of the girls, and oppress them almost to starvation point, but I did not imagine any could be found such as you have described, who would rack their brains to devise so many ways of defrauding those in their employ. Heaven knows, they receive little enough for their work as it is."

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Elliott, "you have, and indeed we all have, I fear, very much to learn yet. And you, too, Clara," she added, turning to her—"Why, bless me, what are you crying about?" she exclaimed, now noticing that Clara's eyes were filled with tears.

"Oh, nothing, mother, nothing," replied Clara, hastily, and dashing the tears away, which filled her eyes; "I was thinking then of my own trifling disappointments."

But no matter, they are passed, and I will not worry any more about them."

"Ah!" exclaimed Miss Edwards, inquiringly, "you have suffered some then already? I knew you would, as soon as I saw your sign out: there are so many ready to take advantage of young beginners."

"But," said Clara, anxious to turn the conversation from herself and her disappointments, "you say you have constant employment now: what can you earn a week?"

"Why, in very good times, and by working from fourteen to sixteen hours a day, I can make as much as two dollars, but the average for the year round is about one dollar and a half. Much, however, depends on the kind of work."

"And how long do you work for that?" asked Laura.

"Never less than twelve, and often fourteen and sixteen hours a day," was the reply, uttered as if unconscious that anything had been said to excite surprise.

A dead silence followed this reply: it appeared so monstrous that, for such a miserable pittance, a girl, young, healthy and industrious, should be compelled to wear out her very life.

"And how long have you been thus employed?"

"Four years next October," replied Miss Edwards. "During that time, thank God, I have never been so unfortunate as to know a sick day; but I have never had a single day of recreation, during these four years, except on Sundays, New-Year's, and on the fourth of

July—nor have I ever taken a single holiday, except on those days.”

“Don’t you ever go out to see your friends?”

“Friends! where is a poor girl who sews for a living, and an orphan, too, to find friends? I have none. I have a few acquaintances, but hardly ever visit them, for my time is too precious to waste in paying visits. Day after day, week after week, and month after month, I sit in one place, and sew from morning to night, and the only exercise I ever take is when I go with my work to the shop, and return. On Sundays I am too much exhausted to go out, and if I was ever so much inclined to go to church, I could not.”

“And why not?” asked Mrs. Elliott, in evident surprise.

“You will find out before long yourselves,” was the reply, as a blush tinged the cheek of the speaker; and she immediately added, as if desirous of changing the current of her hearers’ thoughts: “It is a lonely, weary life to lead, but I try to make the best of it. I do not dare to look to the future, but console myself with the reflection, that ‘sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,’ and try to be thankful for my present comforts.”

“And what would become of you should you be taken sick?” inquired Clara, with trembling eagerness.

“If I did not die too soon, I might possibly be sent to the hospital, as a sick pauper.”

A long pause followed this reply, each one evidently deeply meditating on what they had heard; and the countenances of her hearers showed that her words

had taught them how little of hope the future had for them.

"But," inquired Laura, "do you never have any one to come and sit with you? Do you have nothing day after day, but the cheerless solitude of your room, with nothing to relieve the monotony of your work?—no friend or acquaintance to beguile the tedium of your time?"

"Once in a great while, some one of the girls who work for the same shop that I do, will come and bring her work for half a day; and sometimes the woman with whom I board will come and sit a few minutes with me. Except those, I have no one, and still I would rather work there alone, than go to the shop and work among thirty or forty girls, whom one knows not, and perhaps, there are some whom it is better not to know."

"What do you have to pay for your board?" asked Clara.

"A dollar and a half a week; that is as cheap as I can get it now-a-days. But come, I won't tell you any more to-night. I have already told you too much: I see you are all out of spirits."

"No, no, not at all," exclaimed Mrs. Elliott. "We thank you, I am sure, for your kindness and confidence, for, in our ignorance, we must have been exposed to the same frauds as yourself, without the power to guard against them. Here is Clara, now; she has been constantly at work since the day on which she first commenced dress-making, and she has not as yet received one single cent."

"Why? Have they not been able to pay for whom she worked?"

"Oh yes, I dare say they are all abundantly able to pay; but they consider, probably, the amount due to her so trifling, it is not worth while speaking of; and Clara has already offended some of her customers, by asking for what she had earned. Her's is a hard case, but nothing to what you have suffered."

"Ah, that is too often the case with the rich," replied Miss Edwards. "They forget that the sum which to them is a trifle, is to us almost wealth. They know not how many little necessities for us are dependent on the prompt payment of those trifles."

"Well, I have good customers now," said Clara, who did not much relish to have it known how unsuccessful she had been.

"I dare say you have, Miss Clara," said Louise; "but the rich are not always the best customers. Mrs. Flender, the kind friend who took care of me after my father's death, has told me that she was once employed as seamstress in one of the wealthiest families in the city, residing in a splendid mansion in W—— Place, where she worked without intermission from ten to twelve hours each day—and what do you suppose they paid her?"

"I suppose six shillings a day," said Clara, who had estimated the price according to the amount of labor, a mode of calculation which after experience taught her was quite erroneous.

"Two shillings, and her board! Clara, and she lost

her situation even then, because she would not make up for nothing some garments for the poor, which Mrs. R * * * had taken to make up for some charitable society to which she belonged.”*

“There, for goodness’ sake, don’t tell us any more,” said Laura, with a shudder. “I have half a mind to have a good cry this minute.”

“That would be very foolish and very childish, Laura,” said her mother. “I am sure we have reason to thank Louise for her kindness in telling us of these things. It may prevent us from being deceived hereafter, and I am confident that neither of you would bear up as she has done.”

“Well, I will go now,” said Miss Edwards, rising, and gathering up her work. “It is growing late, and we all need rest, I am sure ; so, good night, but don’t think too much on what I have told you, so as to let it worry you.”

“Mother,” said Clara, after Miss Edwards had retired, “I have half a mind to give up dress-making. If I am to be cheated all the time, as I have been heretofore, out of my hard earnings, I had better give up at once, and try something else, at which I may at least feel sure of being paid for my labor.”

“No, no, not yet, my child ; you have a good opening now at Mr. Simmons’s. Try and improve that for the present, and if the worst comes to the worst, you must give it up, and help us at home. I see no other course.”

* This is an absolute fact, and if necessary the names could be given.

"I think we shall have to make a new calculation as to the extent of our earnings," said Clara, after a brief pause. "I believe, according to my last estimate, Laura and I were to make up about nine dollars a week. With the present prospect, if we get that much for the month, we will have cause to be thankful."

"Yes, indeed," said Laura; "these vests I am making cannot bring me in just now over two dollars a week, at the utmost, for it is new work, comparatively, and I cannot, therefore, make as many at present as I hope to do hereafter. It takes me now a whole day of hard work to make one, and the price is two shillings and sixpence. That lacks a shilling of the two dollars a week, and winter is coming on besides. Dear me, I fairly shudder to think of it."

"Hush, hush, dear," said her mother, "do not begin to look ahead so far already. Remember we are only making experiments now; we may succeed better by and by. It will never do to be so easily discouraged."

"Well, mother, we will hope for the best, but it is only right to prepare for the worst. I knew we should have many difficulties to contend with, and Louise has fairly frightened me. But come, it is bed-time now, and I want to reflect upon what I have heard; so, good night."

Thus saying, and affectionately kissing her mother and sister, she retired.

"I much fear, Clara," said Mrs. Elliott, when Laura had left the room, "that you will be under the necessity of abandoning the dress-making, unless you are more successful than you have been heretofore. The sum

which Laura and I can earn, by the most unceasing industry, is so small, we cannot possibly get on without incurring debt, and I can conceive of nothing which would render us more perfectly miserable than to be in debt, under our present circumstances."

"I am sure, mother, I shall be too glad to be of any assistance, and you know I only chose dress-making because I hoped it would prove the most profitable. You cannot feel for my disappointments as sensibly as I do myself. If I continue to be as unlucky as I have been, I shall gladly give up dress-making, and commence at something else, which will insure a certainty of remuneration for my labor, however small. But I, too, must go to bed, for I have worked very steadily to-day, and am really weary; so, good night, dear mother, and let us hope that 'brighter hours will come.'"

The week was passed by each at their respective duties. Laura sewed with incessant assiduity upon the vests, and by Saturday evening had completed six, which, at the price paid by the *humane* Mr. Simmons, who boasted of having always paid such prices, that the girls who worked for him could make a very comfortable living, would amount to the sum of *one dollar and seven shillings!*

Mrs. Elliott had made fourteen shirts during the week, and that only by working at the average of twelve hours each day: this, at ten cents each, would bring in, as her share of the week's earnings, only *one dollar and forty cents!* But it is true, that when more accustomed to the work, she may make six more.

Clara had worked for four shillings per day on the dresses of the Misses Simmons ; for, being only an *assistant*, she was told they could not think of giving her the full wages paid to a regular dress-maker. However, as she felt that the payment of it was sure, she was grateful even for that much, and left for home, with a heart comparatively at ease. It is true, she had not been paid as yet, but she had not dared to ask for it, for fear of offending them, although her necessities loudly called upon her to do so ; while her lady employers were too much engaged, in showing off the new made finery to some very dear friends, who chanced to drop in toward evening, to think of the poor seamstress, who had toiled so hard for them, and who, for aught they knew, or cared, might actually suffer for the want of the few shillings they owed her.

But presuming that the money from this source will certainly be paid on the following Monday, let us see how much the family have earned during the week.

Laura, at fourteen hours per day, has worked *eighty-four* hours.

Clara and Mrs. Elliott, each working twelve hours a day, have toiled through *seventy-two* hours each, making in all, *two hundred and twenty-eight* hours, and their earnings show that they have worked for TWO AND THREE-QUARTER CENTS PER HOUR !

Let those who doubt, make the calculation for themselves, and let those who deny the truth of what is here stated, take the same trouble as has been taken, to acquire the proper information, and they will find no

forced or unnatural statement, nor will they find that imagination has had any share in painting the above picture.



CHAPTER VIII.

LET us return now to the family of Mr. Simmons, for they too must perform their share in pointing the moral I hope to draw in these pages.

On Saturday evening, soon after Clara had left the house, Mr. Simmons returned home from his store, and entering the room where the new made dresses were laid out for display, exclaimed :

“ Well, I am glad to see you have been so smart, girls, and have got your things made up so soon, for you must be ready to start by Monday evening, or Tuesday morning, at the very utmost.”

“ Why, dear pa !” exclaimed both the daughters in a breath, “ you must be crazy. We have just got our dresses finished, and there are a thousand things yet to be purchased ; and then we must pack up, and see our friends. Oh ! it is impossible—it is entirely out of the question !”

“ Very well ; I have nothing to say if it is impossible. Only let me tell you this : Mr. Seabrook, the rich young Southerner who was with us last summer, came in town this morning, on his road to the Springs,

and he called on me to know when I proposed starting, as he said he must go on by Monday or Tuesday at the farthest, and was very desirous of making one of my party. I have made him promise to delay his departure until Tuesday morning, and told him I would put my wife and daughters under his charge for the journey. If it is impossible to get ready by that time, why of course, you will have to wait until I go, and I can't say how long business may detain me in the city."

"Father, I declare you talk and act almost foolishly," said Euphemia, in tones certainly not the most affectionate. "The idea of engaging to have all our preparations made at two days' notice for a season at the Springs is preposterous, and I have a great mind not to go at all."

"None of your impudence, Miss Phemeý," said the father, rather nettled, "or perhaps I may say you shall not go at all. All I have to say is, if you are not ready to go with Mr. Seabrook, you lose the best chance you have ever had—mark my words. What is there you want which cannot be purchased on Monday?"

"Come, Phemeý," said Maria, coaxingly, "don't get angry. Let us try our best. We can purchase almost all we want on Monday, and we can get the rest of the things at the Springs. Mary, you know, can be packing up while we are out shopping, all we don't pack up to-morrow. Come, father, let us have the money, and I promise we will be ready on Tuesday to go off in the morning boat."

The cloud called up by the reply of Miss Euphemia

was dispelled from Mr. Simmons's brow, by this ready acquiescence in his wishes, and he very cheerfully handed each of his daughters a sum sufficient to purchase necessaries for a whole family for a year, but which they were to expend in showy useless finery.

"There," said Clara, "consider it settled that we leave on Tuesday morning. So, if you see Mr. Seabrook again, you may say we are ready. But I suppose he will be here to-morrow?"

"Yes; I have asked him to dinner," was the reply.

"How could you do that, Mr. Simmons," said his wife, with some asperity, "when you know the girls will require the whole day to fix and pack up, without having to leave off to dress for dinner? How could you be so thoughtless?"

"Oh! don't be finding so much fault. Such men as Mr. Seabrook are not to be caught every day, and I was not willing to lose so good a chance for the girls for the sake of a little inconvenience. You must get on as well as you can, for he is invited, and will be here, of course."

"Well, go along now, pa, and leave us alone. We have plenty to do, and a very short time to do it in. I incline very much to the opinion that very few ladies ever made ready for a season at the Springs in two days."

As soon as Mr. Simmons had left the room, the girls seated themselves, and entered into a long argument as to the best use they could make of the money he had given them. It was very difficult to decide what they

really did want; but they finally agreed to start out on Monday on a shopping excursion, without any definite object in view, but to leave their purchases to chance.

On the following morning, in utter forgetfulness—and, indeed, without a single thought—that it was the sabbath, they commenced the work of packing up, and their room soon presented the appearance of a well stocked store, the various articles of dress and ornament being strewed about in luxurious profusion.

The entire day, with the exception of the time necessary to dress for dinner, and the hours passed at the table, were devoted to the important task of making preparations for their journey, and evening closed upon them jaded, worried, and fatigued.

On Monday morning, soon after breakfast, they started out on their shopping excursion, leaving to Mary, the maid, the task of packing away the articles they had left out. While she was thus engaged, Clara Elliott called, in pursuance of the directions given by the ladies, for the three dollars she had earned during the past week, and was told the young ladies were out, and had left word for her if they did not send it around on Tuesday, she was to call on Wednesday; and she said this with a full knowledge that they were to leave town on Tuesday.

When the Misses Simmons returned home, near the hour for dinner, Mary informed them of Clara's call, and of the unblushing lie she had told her, for which they applauded her ingenuity amazingly, remarking

that they had use for all the money their father had given them, and it was very thoughtfully done in Mary.

"For my part," said Euphemia, "if I had been at home, I would have told her to wait until I was ready to pay her. I never heard any thing like the impudence of some of these sewing girls. They actually seem afraid to trust one."

"Never mind," said Maria, "it is just as well as it is. We will pay her when we come back from the Springs; and by that time, perhaps, she will have learned that it is not best to dun too soon."

I am sure the reader can have, or feel no particular interest in these heartless worldly girls, so I will mention, as briefly as possible, that, by dint of great exertion, and with no little loss of patience and temper, they managed to be in readiness to start for the Springs on the Tuesday morning, chaperoned by Mr. Seabrook, the wealthy Southerner, who was destined to be the husband of one of them; and it was settled between them amicably that whoever should succeed in securing him was to be the happy bride, no matter which one was to be the holder of this grand matrimonial prize—and the unsuccessful one was pledged not to feel aggrieved.

Mrs. Elliott on Saturday evening had carried her work home, and received her week's earnings, amounting to the sum of *one dollar and forty cents*, while Laura, having two weeks due at the store of Mr. Simons, received *three dollars and one shilling*, together

with another bundle of vests to be made up at the same price.

Mrs. Elliott was not so fortunate in procuring more work, but was required to return on Monday morning early, by which time more would be cut out for her. She did go, and received with her large bundle a gentle hint, that, unless more care was bestowed upon those than on the last, her employer would feel compelled to cut her down to eight cents.

When she had reached home, Clara had just returned from her unsuccessful visit to the Misses Simmons, and her eyes were yet red with the tears of bitter disappointment which she could not repress.

"What, Clara," she exclaimed, as her daughter entered the room, "tears again? Have you been disappointed by the Misses Simmons?"

"Yes, mother, I am ashamed to say I have. I did certainly expect when I had earned my miserable wages with such hard labor, I should have no difficulty in being promptly paid by them; but now I am put off until Wednesday."

"Only till Wednesday? I am sure that is not worth crying about. Come, come, dear, don't give way so easily under these trifling disappointments."

"Well, I won't—there!" said Clara, actually dashing away the tears which had again forced themselves to her eyes; "I won't cry again for any of them. I have done dress-making. My capital is not extensive enough for me to give such long credit, so I will help

you on some shirts, and try to earn something toward our common livelihood."

"I don't see but it is the best thing you can do," said her mother, sadly. "You have worked unceasingly now for two weeks, and I do not see that you are ever likely to get any thing for it. I have no idea the Misses Simmons will ever pay you."

"Why, you don't surely think they would cheat me?" asked Clara, eagerly.

"Not exactly that, my dear; but the sum is so small, they can never be brought to think that you really stand in need of it; and, through very heedlessness, they will find a hundred modes of putting you off. I hope I am wrong, but I fear——"

"Well—I will give up the idea of ever getting that, too, but no more dress-making for me; so give me one of your shirts, and I will try what I can earn by making shirts at ten cents a piece; that, I believe, is what you get?"

Before they seated themselves again at work, Mrs. Elliott undertook to make a calculation of their probable income and expenses. Let us follow her.

Thus far, that is in two weeks, the sum total of their earnings received—for Mrs. Elliott had worked only one week—was *four dollars and fifty-two cents*.

The rent of the two rooms they occupied was two dollars per week, and they had in this time made just fifty-two cents over and above the amount of rent, which was payable monthly.

This was certainly not a very pleasant picture, but

then allowances must be made for one week of idleness to Mrs. Elliott, and two weeks dead loss to Clara. So let us see what the next two weeks will produce. Allowing that Clara could and would earn as much at making shirts as Mrs. Elliott, their joint earnings for the week would amount to *two dollars and eighty cents*, or allowing that each could make one additional shirt, *three dollars*.

Laura earned *one dollar and seven shillings*, and the whole amount of earnings for the week would amount to *four dollars and seven shillings*—for the two weeks, nine dollars and six shillings : out of this the rent would take four dollars, leaving five dollars and six shillings for fuel, raiment, food and necessaries for the whole three for the two weeks. This was cheerless enough in truth, but still it might be borne ; and with a full determination to hope for the best, they commenced their daily task.

On Wednesday morning, soon after breakfast, Clara hastened to call at Mr. Simmons's residence, in the full confidence that she would find her money ready for her ; but her surprise was almost too great for expression, when she saw that the house was closed, and evidently for the summer. She rang at the bell, however, to be certain, and had performed this useless operation some half dozen times, when a servant in the adjoining house informed her that she might ring until dooms-day, before any one answered in that house, as the family had started for the country on Tuesday morning.

"Are you sure they went on Tuesday ?" inquired

Clara, who had not forgotten what Mary, the maid, had told her.

"Sure? To be sure I am : didn't I see them go off before seven o'clock, bag and baggage?"

"Then that girl told me a wilful lie," she could not help exclaiming.

"Maybe it's Mr. Simmons you want? He ain't gone to the country, I know, for I saw him at the house in the afternoon. You'll find him at his store, I guess, though he don't live at home when his family is away."

Clara hesitated an instant, and then determined to go at once and see Mr. Simmons at his store, feeling sure that, when he was made acquainted with her circumstances and necessities, he would not refuse to pay this trifling sum for his daughters, and that, too, after it had been so faithfully earned.

She proceeded at once to the store, where she was shown into the private office of Mr. Simmons, and to him she opened the nature of her business, but with much confusion and hesitation, for it was the first time she had ever been compelled to apply for money to a gentleman.

"I dare say it is all correct," said that worthy and humane gentleman; "but I can really do nothing until my girls come back. They will return in three months at the farthest, and then you will receive your money."

"But, sir," she urged, "although it is a very small sum to you, it is really of consequence to me, and I

should feel greatly obliged if you will let me have it now, and not compel me to wait three whole months."

"I can see no possible objection, Miss, except that it would be breaking through the rules by which I conduct my business, never to pay a bill, large or small, until I have ascertained its correctness. Now I do not doubt your word at all, but as for paying the bill, I could not think of such a thing, and I am sure three months is not such a very long time to wait."

"To me, sir, it is an age. But if I have your answer, I need to say no more. Good day, sir."

Mr. Simmons returned her salutation with the greatest conceivable stiffness, and, as soon as she had left the office, he summoned his foreman.

"James, do you give out work to a Miss Elliott?"

"Yes, sir," was, of course, the reply.

"You will give her no more. That's all."

James was too good a disciplinarian to inquire into reasons for any orders he received, but he retired in silence, wondering for a moment what could have caused Mr. Simmons to take such a kink into his head. He made a memoranda, however, of the order, and, in five minutes afterward, the whole subject had passed from his memory.

Clara returned home, and narrated the occurrences of the morning, without shedding a tear. Her pride was now aroused, and she was determined that she should not give way to the weakness which only rendered her more wretched.

"Well," she said, "there is an end for good of my

dress-making. Two weeks of ceaseless toil for nothing. No matter—let it go. ‘Brighter hours will come,’” she added, forcing a smile to her face, while her heart was fiercely aching with disappointment.



CHAPTER IX.

THE care-worn, struggling family, have as yet only tasted the cup of bitterness. The dregs remain to be quaffed, and the draught is not to be avoided much longer.

On Thursday morning, while the girls were clearing away the breakfast-table, Mrs. Elliott, who was seated at her work by the window, suddenly uttered a deep groan, and fell from her chair to the floor, in a state of insensibility. They ran to raise her up, and laid her on the bed, while Clara, without pausing to care for or think of anything but her dear, suffering mother, snatched up her hood, which was lying on a chair, and ran out for a physician.

Just as she turned the corner, she saw a gentleman in a one-horse carriage, and taking it for granted he must be a physician, she ran into the middle of the street, so hastily, that he had to turn his horse to avoid running over her.

"Oh, sir, are you a doctor?" she asked, in eager, hurried tones.

"Yes; what do you want?"

"Quick, quick—my poor mother!" was all she could

say, but it was enough for him who heard her, for he at once drove his horse to the sidewalk, and leaving him there in care of a boy, followed Clara into the house.

As soon as he saw Mrs. Elliott, he shook his head despondingly, and that motion conveyed the intelligence in language not to be misunderstood—there was no hope for the dear mother.

“Oh, dear doctor,” exclaimed Laura, who was seated on the bed, holding her mother’s drooping head, “do save her to us. We are not rich, but we will work for you and pay you; only save her.”

“My dear young ladies, I cannot encourage you. Your mother may live some time longer, but she will be utterly helpless. She has had a paralytic stroke.”

“Oh God, have mercy on us!” exclaimed Clara, clasping her hands; “what will become of us?”

“Do not grieve so; I will do all that can be done for your mother,” said the kind-hearted physician, “but I can give you no hope. Let me get near her,” added he, and he proceeded to examine the unfortunate sufferer. Another and more distinct shake of the head, announced the result of this examination, and writing a prescription, he gave it to Laura, leaving also ample directions how she was to be attended to until he saw her again.

In the afternoon of the same day he came again, and found Mrs. Elliott as he had left her—senseless and immovable. She was certainly, though slowly, sinking, and he felt it his duty to tell the truth to the weeping girls.

"It is better," he said; "she could only lie here senseless and inanimate. It would be a living death, in fact; but she will soon be at rest. There is no use in my prescribing any more for her now. I will call again in the morning."

On the following morning he called, according to promise, but there was no alteration which would permit him to encourage the weeping, desponding daughters. However, he gave minute directions for everything which could tend to alleviate the sufferings of the helpless woman, and then left, with the promise of repeating his visit daily, although perfectly conscious that he could render no possible service.

And now commenced the sorest trial they had yet been called on to endure. Their dearly beloved mother lay before them in helpless suffering, and all their attention and time were required and cheerfully devoted to her. Occasionally, when she would seem to have dropped into a quiet sleep, they would take up their work, and seating themselves by her bedside, sewed on it until the tears, which they could not suppress, blinded their eyes, or until some sound or motion of the sufferer demanded their attention.

It was impossible, under these circumstances, that they could earn anything, and in the course of the week, it became absolutely necessary that money should be raised, as well to pay the rent of their apartments, as to purchase necessaries for themselves, and medicines for their beloved parent.

The few articles of jewelry which they had collect-

ed in happier days, were freely sacrificed, and Clara took them to a pawn-broker's, receiving for them a sum approximating to the fourth part of their actual value, and which was barely sufficient to meet the demands of the landlord.

Such articles of wearing apparel as could be most conveniently dispensed with, followed the jewelry, but they were given up without a sigh, for it was to add to the comfort of their suffering parent.

For four weary weeks Mrs. Elliott lingered, watched daily with the most untiring fidelity by her loving children, who, in their sorrow for her sufferings, forgot all they were called on to undergo, and cheered by the hope which at times they *would* entertain, that she might yet be restored to them.

At length the summons went forth, and Mrs. Elliott was gathered to the dust from whence she sprang, without having been able to utter one word of comfort, or to bestow her blessing upon her devoted children.

It would be a thankless task to attempt to portray a grief so sacred as that which fills the hearts of affectionate children, when relentless death has robbed them of the dearly loved parent, and that parent too their only earthly stay and comfort. None can truly sympathise with them in such afflictions, but those who have been called to mourn a similar loss, and to such I need not address a single word.

The change which this sad and sudden bereavement wrought in the condition and prospects of the unhappy orphans was great, and perhaps it is not too strong a

term to use, to call it terrible. They were by this unlooked for dispensation, left alone in the world, without one single friend to console or aid them. They were young, and comparatively inexperienced; for having never been thrown in contact with that cheerless, soulless world, they were consequently unacquainted with most of its trials, its temptations, and as yet, but few of its harrowing disappointments had they been called on to experience.

They mourned the lost friend and parent, as the children of such a parent would and ever must mourn, but their circumstances called upon them for great exertions, and they prayed for strength that they might make them. They could not afford to indulge in symbols of exterior mourning for their beloved parent, but they commenced at once laying their plans for future usefulness to themselves. Each felt that necessity loudly called upon them for redoubled exertions, and although the prospect even with these efforts was dark and dreary, without one single ray of hope to cheer the future, they determined to make them, trusting in God for help.

Their first step was to complete the work which their mother had taken from the shirt store, but when finished, neither of them knew where she had obtained it. They had not considered it worth their while to inquire previous to this sad event, and indeed each had been too much engrossed with their own tasks to think of it at all.

This was a most awkward dilemma, and they felt that this ignorance might expose them to unjust and

cruel suspicions: for the poor are almost always objects of suspicion. What to do they knew not. Two weeks had already elapsed since their mother's death, and they had vainly sought to find some clue which would enable them to deliver the shirts to the rightful owner. Chance, however, relieved them in this difficulty, and the sum they received for their work, enabled them to purchase a few necessary articles, of which they had been long deprived, and of which they stood sadly in need.

Laura finished the vests, and took them to Mr. Simmons's store, intending to obtain double the number, in order that Clara too might work with her, as they concluded they could earn as much while working on them, as on any other branch of sewing.

The foreman took her bundle, and asking for her pass-book, made the usual entry, which done, to her surprise, he handed her the amount due for them, and was turning away, when she addressed him, saying :

"If you please, sir, I should like to have a dozen instead of six, as my sister works on them with me."

"We have no more to give out," replied the young man, in obedience to the orders he had received from Mr. Simmons.

"I hope, sir," said Laura, thinking that he refused to give her more work because she had so long delayed bringing these home—"I hope, sir, it is not because I have not brought the present work home sooner. Indeed I could not help it, for since I took them out, we

have lost our poor mother. That has caused the delay, sir, but I assure you it shall not occur again."

"We have no more work to give out, miss," was the reply, but uttered with something like civility; for the foreman could not avoid seeing that Laura's hat was trimmed in deep mourning, (the only exterior sign of her loss she could afford,) and that tears filled her eyes as she spoke of her bereavement.

"I should like to see Mr. Simmons," meekly asked Laura, nothing doubting that there was some misunderstanding. "I am sure if he knew how we are situated, he would not refuse to give us work."

"It is not because you have delayed bringing these home," said the foreman, "but——" and he hesitated.

"Well, sir, and why do you refuse me? Does not the work suit you? I am sure I have done my best."

"Oh no, not at all; but the truth is," and the foreman looked actually ashamed as he spoke, for he had some remnant of humanity in him, "Mr. Simmons left orders with me to give *you* no more work, and I have no course but to obey."

"I cannot possibly believe that," replied Laura, quickly; "I will see Mr. Simmons himself."

"That you cannot do, unless you go to Saratoga, for he left the city yesterday."

"Good Heaven! what shall I do?" exclaimed she, in accents of despair. "Why can he have given such an order? I will not of course ask you to disobey him, but can you recommend me to any other place where I may obtain work?"

"I cannot, indeed," said the foreman, emboldened by the certainty that Laura was really distressed, and not knowing how far he might venture with her in that state of feeling. But in a moment after, he added: "I do not mind taking the risk of letting you have work in some other manner, on one condition," and he leered at her with a look which could have but one meaning.

The honest blood mounted to the neck, and cheek and brow of the insulted girl, and the veins fairly swelled on her forehead, as she gazed upon him for a single instant, but with a look of such withering contempt, that the miserable creature actually quailed beneath it, and shrank abashed within his debased self.

"Oh, well, you need not make such a time about it," he added, quickly, his face crimsoned with shame, but not daring to look at her. "The time may come when you will be glad to remember my offer. I have no work to give you now."

"I would starve before I would accept it from your hands," proudly replied the insulted girl, turning to leave the store, as she thought, unnoticed.

I say, as she thought; but one person, whom she had not seen, had noticed her, and had overheard sufficient of what had fallen from her lips, to judge of the nature of his conversation, and she felt proud of her sex, as she saw the outraged and indignant girl turn to leave the store.

This person was a young lady, Miss Eva Bellamy, who had called at the store to make interest for a young girl who had been discharged, or rather to whom work

had been also refused, because she was delicate and sickly, and was often more tardy in returning her work than was agreeable to the foreman.

She had been shown into the private office attached to the store, and having been interrupted in the business which brought her there, by the entrance of Laura, had remained an anxious and attentive listener of their conversation, and her heart swelled with virtuous indignation, as she heard the proud reply of the insulted and outraged girl.

Miss Bellamy, though young, was an ardent, warm-hearted philanthropist, and as a member of the Christian church, the duties of which she discharged with the most zealous fidelity, she was necessarily often thrown in contact with poverty and distress, in almost every shape in which they are presented in this great metropolis. Her heart was filled with tender sympathy for the sufferings and oppression of her sex, and although her own means were comparatively limited, she found and embraced more opportunities of doing good, and bestowing happiness and pleasure, than thousands who were more fortunately circumstanced, in point of pecuniary ability.

The reader can care but little to know the personal appearance of Miss Bellamy, and indeed that was not sufficiently striking to command especial notice. But her choicest treasure was in a mind, richly stored with every good and virtuous feeling which could adorn the wearer, and confer happiness and joy on all who came within the sphere of its generous, sympathizing influence. She

was not formed to attract the gaze or admiration of every beholder, and indeed none could properly form any estimate of Eva's qualities, without having come within the influence of her pure and lovely mind.

As Laura turned to leave the store, Eva involuntarily rose, and was moving toward the door, with the same intention, when the foreman, again all politeness and fawning, begged her to be re-seated, assuring her that, now that troublesome girl was gone, he would attend to her with great pleasure, and if it was in his power, he would do anything to serve her.

Eva restrained the bitter, cutting remarks which her heart prompted, and apologizing for the necessity which compelled her to postpone to a more distant season the transaction of her own business, hurried out after Laura.

Laura had only proceeded two or three squares, when feeling her arm touched gently, she turned suddenly round, thinking it was the insolent foreman, but her countenance immediately changed, when she perceived that it was one of her own sex, and one too, whose appearance bore the impress of peace, and truth, and virtue.

"I beg your pardon, miss," said Eva, "but I overheard your remarks to that insulting villain in Mr. Simmons's store, and while I feel a pride in the just rebuke you administered to him, I would gladly make an effort to avert the consequences which may be entailed upon you. Can I do anything to serve you?"

There was an air of such open frankness, such candor, such sincerity, in the countenance of the

youthful speaker, Laura could not doubt her, and without hesitation, she replied, as she wiped the tears from her eyes :

"In truth it has made me very unhappy. We are now so situated, that if we are deprived of work for any length of time, the consequences must be serious. I do not know how far you can serve me, unless indeed, you can inform me where I may obtain work."

"Well, I think I *can* do that," said Eva. "There is no knowing, without trying, how much one can do."

"I shall be but too grateful for the assistance of any person now. I feel so lost and disheartened, I know not which way to turn."

"May I intrude myself so far upon you, as to ask leave to accompany you to your home ? I can advise better with you there."

"Most certainly, and I shall be thankful too. We need a friend now more than ever before."

There was something so winning, so attractive, in Eva Bellamy's manner, something so natural, as if every word of kindness came fresh from a heart overflowing with it, she insensibly gained Laura's confidence, and before they reached her home, Eva was partially acquainted with the history of the orphans, sufficiently so at least to feel a deep interest in their future career.

When she entered their room, the air of neatness which pervaded everything, in spite of the poverty which was too apparent to be concealed, attracted her

attention, and she sighed as she thought how sure it was that a change must ere long come over them.

"Here, Clara," said Laura to her sister, as she entered the apartment, followed by Eva, "is a young lady—I almost feel like calling her an angel—who has been very kind to me."

Clara looked at Eva for an instant, with some appearance of hesitation, but saw nothing to excite alarm or distrust. She then advanced, giving her hand frankly, and saying:

"I am sure I shall be pleased to know you."

Clara heard with deep emotion the result of her sister's visit to Mr. Simmons's store, and as she concluded her recital, she said, with a sigh:

"I am afraid, Laura, this is all my work."

"Your work, dear sister—how can that be?"

"Nothing more easy. I went to Mr. Simmons's store on the day I heard his family had left for the Springs, and was foolish enough to ask him for payment of the small sum his daughters owed me. Doubtless I offended him, and hence the orders to give you no more work."

"Oh do not let that annoy you," exclaimed Miss Bellamy. "Mr. Simmons is very cruel in some respects to those in his employ, though I believe he always pays them promptly, and I have no doubt, in a momentary fit of ill-humor, he did give those orders. When you, miss," she said, turning to Laura, "came into the store to-day, I had just arrived there also, for the purpose of interceding for a poor young girl, who had

worked herself sick in his employ, and because while sick she had not returned some work as soon as he thought she ought to have done, he discharged her. However, now, I would not go back there again on any account. But come, never mind Mr. Simmons; let us think of some one else. I think I know a place where I can get you work, though not so good, nor perhaps so profitable as this you have had."

"I tell you what," said Clara, turning to Laura, as if she had not heard what Eva had said, "I have a mind to be independent for once, and give Mr. Simmons a little of my mind."

"How would you do that?" inquired Laura.

"Why, he has gone to the Springs, I understand, where his wife and daughters are, and I have a mind to send him my bill for making his daughters' dresses, receipted."

Miss Bellamy had listened attentively to what Clara had said, and a flush came to her face, as she said:

"Will you pardon a stranger for interfering at all, but really I think that would be in very bad taste, to say nothing worse. You may have formed a wrong opinion in regard to Mr. Simmons, as you do not know the reason of his refusing work to your sister, although, as I before said, I do not doubt he did give such orders, and you may thus offend a gentleman who certainly has it in his power to serve you."

Clara looked confused as this well-merited rebuke was administered, in mild and gentle tones, and at first

she thought of being offended, but that passed off in an instant, and she replied quickly :

"You are right, miss, and I was wrong. I will do no such foolish act. Those three dollars may be very acceptable in time to come, and besides insulting Mr. Simmons, I should be doing an injury to myself."

"Come, young ladies," said Miss Bellamy, "I am a stranger to you, but believe me, not entirely uninterested. From the moment Miss Laura there, answered so readily the insult of the contemptible fop at Mr. Simmons's store, I saw trouble brewing, and as I am used to similar occurrences, I thought I might prove serviceable to you. If it is not taking too great a liberty, may I ask if you depend entirely on your needles for support?"

"Entirely," was the reply.

"Then I am sure you will not refuse to allow me to search for work for you. I know you cannot afford to be idle, and I think I know a gentleman who will not refuse me any reasonable request. I will, therefore, endeavor to procure work from him, but mind you, it is much more difficult and not so well paid for either, as the vests."

"We must not stop to choose now," said Clara, "but will be thankful for anything. This is a hard blow so soon after our late bereavement——" and without finishing the sentence, she burst into tears.

"Pardon me," said Eva, rising, "for intruding upon your grief—I will retire."

"Oh no, no," exclaimed Laura. "We have not a

friend in the wide world ; do not leave us now that we need one more than ever."

Eva reseated herself, and learned briefly from Laura a history of the circumstances which had so reduced them, and every warm feeling of her kind and generous heart was aroused in behalf of the bereaved orphans.

"I must go now and see Mr. Oatman. He, I know, has a great deal of work done, and you shan't be idle long. So, good by—cheer up, and remember that the darkest hour is just before the dawn."

So saying, she departed, leaving the sisters amazed, yet delighted. They were amazed to see one so young, so full of kindly, generous sympathy for her sex, little knowing that from her earliest girlhood Eva Bellamy had found her chief pleasure in doing good for others, and they were delighted to have found one who seemed so competent to advise, and so willing to assist them in this hour of trying difficulty.

Eva's mission of kindness proved successful, for in less than two hours after her departure, a large bundle was brought to them, with a note from her. The roll contained the materials for two dozen of "over-alls," a garment made of coarse twilled cotton, intended for cartmen, porters, etc., to draw on over their other clothes, to save them from dirt and rents. The note informed them that they were to receive *one shilling* a pair for making them, and expressed her regret that she could not procure any more easy or profitable work.

Before commencing work, Clara and Laura had a

long conversation upon their future prospects, and they came to the conclusion that it would be impossible for them to retain the rooms they now occupied, at the same rate of rent. They, therefore, determined to occupy but one room, and to make that, for the present, serve all purposes. It was rather a discouraging beginning, but they saw the necessity of the strictest economy, and made up their minds to practice it, without a murmur.



CHAPTER X.

LAURA and her sister had yet some difficulties to overcome, which they had not anticipated. They contemplated giving up all the rooms they had occupied during their mother's lifetime, except one, the rent of which they thought they might manage to pay without any very great difficulty. There was, however, a month's rent of the rooms due to the landlord already, to meet which they had not a single cent, as the funeral expenses of their mother had absorbed all the money they had been able to procure, by pawning every article they could possibly spare; but they relied upon the *humanity* of the landlord to allow them a sufficient time to earn and save enough to pay him.

The kind physician who had attended their dear mother with such assiduous care, saw at once their situation, and aware of their inability to pay a physician's bill without distressing themselves, he positively refused to accept of one single cent, assuring them at the same time, that if they felt a confidence in him, he should feel offended if they did not always call on him when a physician's services were required, an act of

kindness for which they thanked him from their hearts.

They commenced their new work with heavy hearts, and every effort they made to be gay and cheerful, seemed only to sink them deeper in despair. The work was very hard, and as it was new to them for the first week, they could only make at the most two pairs a day, and even that was not accomplished without the most incessant toil. This was earning *two and a half cents* per hour ; they working without cessation twelve hours a day.

Their landlord called upon them, to receive his rent, at the commencement of the ensuing week, and they then made the proposal to him, to release them from the other rooms, promising to pay up the back rent as fast as it could be earned.

This man had made the money which enabled him to be a landlord by keeping a low retail liquor store, an occupation not tending very much to elevate his character, or to inspire him with the most tender feelings for the sufferings of others.

He listened to their proposal in silence, and when Clara had ceased speaking, he said, gruffly :

“What security am I to have for the rent?”

“We cannot give any but our own word. The rent of the single room will be only one dollar a week, and if we do not pay punctually, of course you will have it in your power to turn us out.”

“Yes, that is all very well, and lose my rent. No, no, that won’t do ; I must have the back rent paid up

at once, and security given for the remainder, or you must go. I can't afford to let my rooms for nothing, when I can get plenty of good tenants who will pay."

"But we cannot give security, and surely you will not turn us out of doors. We can earn the rent each week, and will pay it promptly."

"Well," said the brute, "suppose you are taken sick, who is to pay me then?"

"We certainly ought to make allowance for that, for we are all liable to sickness; but in such a case, *we* should have to suffer, I suppose."

"Well, if you can't do any better than that, you can't have my rooms any longer. When your mother was alive, I didn't require security—but girls are so apt to cheat one."

"Never mind, sir; you need not say any more," said Clara, proudly; "we will try and procure other rooms."

"You may do that as soon as you please, only I'll thank you to pay the back rent."

"That we will do, I assure you, as soon as we can possibly earn it. We will pay it in weekly instalments."

"And do you suppose I am such a fool as to let you take this furniture away without paying me? No, no. I dare say you would pay me if you had the money, but as you haven't got it, I can't afford to wait till you can earn it; so I must make the best of it, and you have no right to complain."

So saying, the brutal landlord left them, in a state of

the most painful suspense: for they were utterly ignorant of the power which the law gave to him over them.

They seated themselves again at their work, but it was in vain: their eyes so filled with tears, they could not see a stitch they took, and it was laid aside.

"I wonder, dear sister," said Clara, "what that man intends to do? Surely he won't turn us out of doors now."

"I don't know. He looks as if he would do anything for money. However, we shall soon know, I dare say. How I wish that young lady was here now to advise us. She seems to be so familiar with everything of this kind, she could tell us what to do."

"She is a wonderful girl. She has so much kindness, so much sympathy, so much courage, I declare I fell fairly in love with her at first sight."

"Here is somebody coming up—but it is not Eva," said Laura, as a heavy step was heard ascending the stairs toward their room, and immediately after a rap at the door announced a visitor. In answer to the "come in," a tall, hard-featured, coarse-looking man entered, and with an attempt at civility, said:

"I am sorry to disturb you, ladies, but the law must take its course."

At the mention of the word *law*, the hearts of the orphans sank within them. It conveyed to them thousands of ill-defined terrors, and for an instant they scarcely seemed to breathe.

"I don't know what you mean by saying the law must take its course. I am sure we have done nothing

to offend the law," said Clara, who first found voice to speak.

"I didn't say you had, but I've got a warrant here to seize this 'ere furniture, and to see you safe out of the house."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Clara, starting up, "you do not mean to say that Mr. Ellis has seized our furniture?"

"No, ma'am, I didn't mean any such a thing; I mean to say that I do, though, for him, by virtue of this 'ere warrant. So I must do my duty."

"Surely you will not take all this furniture for the paltry sum we owe him?" asked Laura, looking around upon their neatly furnished room.

"I don't know why I should not. Furniture at auction, just now, won't bring much more than a quarter of its value; but that's your misfortune."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! sir, don't be so cruel as to leave us entirely destitute. We will pay the rent as soon as we can possibly earn it."

"I dare say that is all very correct, miss, but I have got no choice. I am ordered to seize on this 'ere furniture, and seize it I must. But, I tell you what I will do. You look as if you wouldn't try to cheat me, so I'll leave the furniture here till to-morrow morning, and perhaps you may be able to raise the money in the meantime. You must promise me you won't try to get any of it away."

"Indeed, indeed, we will not; and although I have no hope we shall be able to procure any money, we

may find a place where we can go after we are turned out."

"Well, I will trust you so far; but mind you, if you do play me any tricks, it will be all the worse for you, I tell you. So good-bye; I will be here again to-morrow morning, about this time," and he left them.

A good hearty cry seemed to relieve their hearts, and after the first feelings of grief had subsided, they turned their thoughts to the future.

"Now," said Laura, "I will go and seek Miss Bellamy. She can advise us how to act, and as she appears to know so much better than we do about everything, her advice will be of service to us, and I know she will cheerfully give it."

"Oh yes, go by all means," said Clara, who felt her own inability to act in this trying crisis; "go, by all means, and ask her to come here in the morning. Who knows but that constable may impose on us, because of our very ignorance in such matters. I am sure for the trifle we owe Mr. Ellis, he ought not to take all our furniture, and leave us completely destitute."

"I am sure I cannot tell or imagine what he may do, I am so perfectly ignorant. But I will now go and seek Miss Bellamy. Perhaps she can help us in our trouble; so don't be frightened if I should stay out rather long."

So saying, Laura departed in search of the young friend on whose advice they relied so much, and after a weary search of two hours, returned without having succeeded in finding her.

"I am sure I don't know what we shall do. It is really dreadful to be so imposed on," exclaimed Clara, when she learned the ill success of her sister's search.

"Well, we must bear it as well as we can. The law can only take away what we have got, and we can go to work and earn more. For my part, I don't mean to cry about it any more."

"It is all very well to talk so, Laura; but what are we going to do, when all our furniture is gone? Where are we to sleep? Where to eat?"

"Sleep? eat? Who ever heard of poor girls thinking about sleeping and eating?" exclaimed Laura, in tones of bitter sarcasm. "No, no, don't let such ideas as that distress you! We require only *work*; we can live on that," she added, with bitterness, while tears forced themselves to her eyes.

That night was passed in sleepless worrying, and regrets that they had not succeeded in finding Miss Belamy, but they hoped that chance might bring her in their neighborhood in the morning, before the constable returned.

In this, however, they were disappointed, as he was punctual to a minute, and Eva had not yet made her appearance.

"Well, girls, I suppose you've got the money for me?" he said, as he made a clumsy obeisance.

"I am very sorry to say we have not," said Laura, calmly.

"Well, then, my course is plain. I must take the things and sell them."

"You surely will not take all this furniture, for so trifling a claim as that against us. Mr. Ellis could never have given any such orders. He is not so cruel as that."

"I don't know any thing about Mr. Ellis or his orders. I have got a warrant here to distrain for one month's rent and costs, and I rather guess that all this furniture, if sold in Chatham street, won't more than pay it. But if there is any left, I will, of course, pay it over to you. I must, however, do my duty; so I suppose I can send them off at once."

"But we can keep our clothes?" inquired Clara.

"Oh, certainly; only you must get them out quick, as I have lost half a day already by trying to oblige you."

The girls saw there was no use of arguing further with a man who had but the one idea in his head, and taking their clothes from their only bureau, they laid them in their trunks, and piece by piece the room was stripped of every article of furniture, which was rudely and carelessly piled on a cart, which the constable had brought with him.

As the last article was carried off, and the officer of the law had bowed himself out of the room, with "I am really very sorry for you, girls, but the law must have its course," the sisters seated themselves on their trunks, and gave way to a hearty flow of tears.

But even this luxury was denied them long, for they were interrupted by a knock at the door, and, in reply to their "come in," a smiling good-natured little woman entered.

"Well, my dears," she said, familiarly, "I have rented these rooms, as Mr. Ellis told me you were leaving; but if you ain't ready to go yet, just say so, and I will leave you in them till to-morrow."

"Go!" exclaimed Clara, "where can we go? Mr. Ellis has turned us out of doors, and we have no place to lay our heads. He has stripped us of every article of furniture, and bids us go."

"And has Mr. Ellis done that?" inquired the stranger, her little gray eyes flashing.

"He has, indeed," replied Laura, sobbing.

"Then you may stay here just as long as you choose. I have only got one little child, and don't want all the rooms, so you can have one, and I've got plenty of furniture, such as it is; so make your hearts easy on that score. I've paid my rent in advance, and he can't hinder me from doing what I choose with my own rooms."

The sisters expressed their most grateful thanks for this unexpected act of kindness, which they accepted, assuring their kind hostess that they would cheerfully pay her whatever she might deem proper to ask for their board.

"Come, come, make your hearts perfectly easy, girls. I am poor, but poverty has not steeled my heart against the distresses of my fellow-creatures. I have to sew for my living, as I dare say you do, and there is no use in our worrying each other. You shall have the room for what you can afford to pay, and I will make you as comfortable as possible. I am sure I should

never have another night's rest, if I were to let you go out of the house without knowing where you were to go, or which way to turn. Come, my things will be here right away, and if we work sharp, we can get all straight by dinner time.'

Mrs. Stewart, for that was the name of this kind little woman, bustled about to such good purpose, and the sisters assisted her so readily, that, as she predicted, the rooms were in order by dinner time.

Clara and Laura could scarcely realize the change, so sudden had it been. A few short hours before, and they were houseless, homeless—without a friend to look to, and the prospect before them dark indeed. They felt that Providence had especially interposed in their behalf, and they poured out in the very fullness of their hearts their grateful thanks to God for his unceasing goodness, imploring also grace to be able to submit with humility and cheerfulness to any dispensation which the future might bring upon them. The entire day was occupied by them in assisting Mrs. Stewart, and at night they retired to rest weary and fatigued, but with hearts comparatively at ease.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. SIMMONS, with his interesting family, had been at the Springs some three or four weeks, living in the most luxurious and extravagant style, exciting the admiration of some and the envy of others.

It was settled between the amiable sisters that Mr. Seabrook, the wealthy Southerner, was to be the husband of one of them before the season closed. The heart had nothing whatever to do with any marriage of theirs, which they might contract, so that was not to be counselled. He was wealthy, and what was to them quite as desirable, was of a most ancient and *aristocratic family*; so he was plied with attentions with which no man possessed of less than the ordinary share of common sense could fail to feel flattered. He was quite at a loss which of the two to choose. He had made up his mind that one of them was to be his wife, but it was very difficult to decide between them. Day after day he was with them on riding, fishing, or picnic excursions, and each day his indecision became more harassing.

One day he had made up his mind to select Euphe-

mia, but on the next Maria had been so exceedingly fascinating, he was again turned.

While the future husband of one of the young ladies was in this unpleasant predicament, Mr. Simmons one day received a letter from his head clerk, the contents of which caused him so much agitation that he could not conceal it, and Mr. Seabrook, who was with him at the time, could not forbear asking if he had received any unpleasant news.

"No—not at all; rather singular though," was the reply, given in a hurried and excited manner; so much so as to induce the suspicion in the mind of Mr. Seabrook that it was exactly the reverse. And Mr. Simmons added, "But I must go down to the city and inquire into it. Shall I leave my family in your charge, Mr. Seabrook?" he inquired, in his blandest tones.

"With the greatest pleasure in the world. I shall be too happy in having such a charge confided to me," politely replied that gentleman.

By the next conveyance, Mr. Simmons was on the road to the city, and in no very amiable state of mind. The letter from his clerk informed him that drafts to a large amount, drawn by a heavy Southern house in his favor, had been dishonored, and there was good reason to apprehend a crash.

Mr. Simmons foresaw that, if this house failed, his own ruin was inevitable. For the past few months he had been much harassed for money, and this disappointment would effectually cripple him. He knew that prompt and decisive measures alone could save

him, and he was hastening to the city to put them in operation.

On reaching the store, he found that he had arrived too late. The Southern house was gone past hope, and those who knew his intimate connection with them, foresaw his downfall. Bills were poured in upon him with the most appalling celerity. Friends on whom he had often before relied, were now hard run; they could afford him no assistance. At least, they said so, and he had the additional mortification of knowing that it was not true, but that this excuse was only made to soften a refusal of the required loan.

At length one heavy day came, and Mr. Simmons was compelled to allow his notes to lie over. The news of a failure such as his, was not long unknown in a great commercial city like New-York, and before night of that day, every piece of property he owned in the world was attached.

Hurriedly he wrote a note to his wife and daughters, informing them of his failure, and urging them to secure Mr. Seabrook, at all hazards.

But that gentleman was not so easily secured. He suspected from the manner of Mr. Simmons that all was not right, and had written to a mercantile friend in the city to inform him of the state of his future father-in-law's affairs. The reply was so perfectly satisfactory that, on the morning after its receipt, he found himself called home by the most alarming intelligence as to the health of an aged uncle, whose heir he was to be, nor could all the entreaties of Mrs. Simmons, aided by the

imploring looks of the fascinating daughters, keep him a single hour, and he departed amid sighs of regret.

The day after his departure, the letter from Mr. Simmons reached its destination, and the news came like a thunder clap upon them. A council was at once held, and, as securing Mr. Seabrook was now impossible, it was determined to secure, if possible, some other equally eligible match.

But here again they were checked. The failure of Mr. Simmons had been publicly announced, and long before the mother and daughters had arranged their plans, every visitor at the Springs knew of it. The cold looks of their quondam friends—the expressions of sympathy for their misfortune—the ill-concealed sneers of those who had formerly envied them—added gall to the bitter draught they had been forced to swallow, and seeing that Saratoga was no longer the place for them, they made preparations for leaving.

Here again, however, another unlooked for difficulty presented itself. They had run up an enormous bill at the expensive hotel where they had resided, and all the ready money which Mr. Simmons had so freely lavished on them, had long since been dissipated in foolish extravagances. The landlord, however, proved more accommodating than they had anticipated, and permitted them to depart, with the assurance that his bill should be settled immediately upon their reaching the city. He had not the least idea he should ever see one cent, but he wisely thought that he had better have his rooms vacant, than to support upon so poor a pros-

pect of remuneration, so extravagant and troublesome a family as that of Mr. Simmons's.

Mr. Simmons's failure was, in truth, perfectly ruinous. He had lived up to the very height of his income, and had not assets enough to pay fifty cents on the dollar. This created much hard feeling against him among his creditors, who had been disposed at first to treat him with lenity, but when his books were exhibited and his personal expenses made known, he was required to give up every thing to satisfy their demands.

Mrs. Simmons and her daughters could scarcely realize the change which the short period of two weeks had made in their circumstances. Reduced suddenly from wealth to a poverty as chilling as that of their earliest years, they were utterly unable to bear up against it. True, wealth had suddenly flowed in upon them, and as suddenly vanished. True, they had risen from the humblest walks in life to a rank and station attained by very few, except by those who have wealth at their command; and that, too, by a chain of circumstances purely fortuitous. But they had grown proud, haughty and conceited, as they grew rich, and, as each year added to their importance, they felt it impossible that they could recede. They had never suffered a thought that poverty was a thing of possible occurrence with them to disturb the quiet of their days, and were, therefore, entirely unprepared for the change.

Nor had they any source of comfort or consolation in their own hearts. Each looked upon the other now

with distrust. Each felt that the other was in her way, and each one was prepared, at any moment, to sacrifice the other, if, by so doing, she could be again elevated to the height from which they had been thus suddenly precipitated.

Mr. Simmons knew well what he had to do. He saw around him a family entirely unfitted to be of the least possible service to him. True, his daughters had been elegantly educated, and were what the world terms accomplished. They could play, and sing, and dance, and, in company could make themselves agreeable. But in their own home they were perfectly useless fixtures: of the ordinary domestic duties profoundly ignorant, they could be of no service at home, and they displayed no desire to be useful to themselves or to others abroad.

Mrs. Simmons felt the sudden revulsion as bitterly as did either of her daughters; but she had in earlier days been accustomed to poverty, and, with all her faults, she loved her husband too well to desire to see him alone and comfortless now. She knew well the characters of her children, and had good cause to dread for them, but she determined to neglect no precaution which might save them.

A small house was taken in the upper part of the city, and Mr. Simmons, having procured a clerkship in a large store at a fair salary, hoped to enjoy comparative peace. But he little knew, or remembered that he who sows the wind must expect to reap the whirlwind. His daughters had been brought up amid the refinements

of ease and luxury, ever so readily attained by those who have wealth at their command; and among the earliest lessons impressed upon their minds, was a perfect and unmitigated contempt for poverty. The idea of feeling for the wants of another was something so strange, it never found a place in their hearts, and as for sympathy with their suffering fellow-creatures, it was an emotion they had never experienced.

They had, however, some lessons yet to learn, which were to make ineffaceable impressions on their minds; and they were doomed to drink to the dregs of the cup they had so often held to the lips of others. They had, in the vanity of their hearts, conceived that the attentions paid to them, and the flatteries so often poured into their willing ears, were tributes to their worth, to their graces, and to their accomplishments, and while they had ever felt happy in exciting envy in others, by the display which their father's wealth enabled them to make, they had never dreamed that Providence might reverse the picture, and place them in the position of those whom they delighted to torment.

All the efforts of their father and mother to induce them to apply themselves to some useful occupation proved unavailing, and their time was passed in gadding from house to house.

But the coldness of their reception was such at nearly every place they visited, they could not longer even fancy themselves welcome, and could they have heard one half of the remarks drawn forth by their visit, shame would have deterred them from repeating it.

Of all the families with whom in the hour of their prosperity they had been on terms of intimacy, not one was there but received them with the most freezing coldness, and, on one occasion, as they were about leaving the house of one who had been one of their "dearest friends," they overheard the order given—"Not at home in future to the Misses Simmons!"

At home, they frittered away their time in useless repinings, instead of applying themselves to domestic employments, and the consequence was they soon became sullen and morose, quarrelling with each other, impertinent to their parents, and a burthen to themselves.

Mr. Simmons regretted this sad change in his circumstances full as much for the sake of his children as for himself, for he was sufficiently a man of the world to know that, while they were counted wealthy, all their faults would be overlooked, and they might make almost any marriage they chose. But as the children of a poor man, and with faults so glaring in their characters, such as he saw too plainly, he knew that their prospects of settlement were poor indeed, and he used every effort to impress upon their minds the necessity of an alteration in their conduct and manners. But they heeded his advice with contemptuous indifference, and promised not long to be a burthen to him.

In this manner this unhappy family passed several months, their house being daily a scene of wrangling and quarrelling, producing a bitterness of feeling which, in the end, extinguished almost every spark of affec-

tion, and which severed the hearts of the sisters as completely as though they had been strangers to each other, or, perhaps, acquaintances of the hour.

But, leaving them for the time, let us return to Clara and Laura Elliott, whom we left in the care of the kind-hearted Mrs. Stewart.



CHAPTER XII

THE day after the occurrences detailed in a previous chapter, while Clara and her sister were seated at their work, they received an unexpected, but most welcome call from Miss Bellamy, who had been absent from the city for a few days.

"Why, girls," said she, as soon as she entered their little room, "what have you been doing? You have changed all your furniture."

Tears started to the eyes of the sisters, as they heard the remark, but checking them, they proceeded to narrate the circumstances which led to the alteration in the appearance of their apartment. Eva listened with deep attention, and her generous heart glowed with kindly sympathy, as she wept over the trials of the unfortunate orphans.

"Well," she exclaimed, when the narrative was finished, "you have one comfort left, of which all the constables in the world cannot deprive you. You have God in whom to trust, and he will not desert you, I am sure."

"Yes, dear Miss Bellamy, and we have in you one

earthly friend, whose generous sympathy has lightened many heavy hours of their load. We may never be able to repay your kindness, but we never will forget it, or cease to remember you in our prayers."

"You will pain me," replied Eva, "by speaking thus. I act ever from the promptings of my own heart, and in the consciousness that I perform my duty, I have ever derived my highest reward. But how fare you? How do you get on with your work? Have you ascertained yet how much you can make at it."

"I fear," replied Clara, "that our prospects are not the most flattering. At the very most, we cannot make more than two pairs of these each in a day, and that gives us only twelve shillings apiece for the week's work."

"I wish I could assist you myself," exclaimed Eva, in the fullness of her heart, "but I cannot; my poor mother is very feeble, and all the time I can spare, I must devote to her comfort. Besides, all the duties of our little household devolve upon me, and however good my will may be, my powers will not permit me to perform more than I now do."

"We surely could not expect that, Miss Bellamy. But do not deprive us of your friendship, your advice, and your occasional visits. Besides yourself, there is no human being whom we may call friend, and our inexperience renders us sadly in need of your assistance."

"I would I could do more for you, indeed, than to

advise ; but do not despair. When you have seen one-half the suffering I have been compelled to witness, you will think your own lot comparatively happy. There is one sentence I wish to impress deeply upon your minds—so deeply, I hope you will never forget it. It is my own motto, and it has supported me through many hours of sad, weary, and cheerless anxiety: ‘Brighter hours will come.’ Bear this in mind, and if it brings to your hearts half the peace those precious words have bestowed on me, when I felt that all was dark and cheerless, without one ray of hope, you will submit with cheerfulness to your lot. Believe me, girls, I have had my sufferings, and though I have not yet been called on to bear the lot of poverty, I have experienced that which I would gladly exchange even for a portion so dreary.”

Eva spoke this with a serious, almost solemn earnestness, that told much more than met the ear ; for the girls could not imagine that one situated as she was, blessed in the affection of a mother, enjoying the comforts of a home, and shedding peace, joy and happiness on all around her, could have any grief which these few words could assuage. But, alas! how mysterious are the workings of the human heart, and how few there are to whom it is given to read them.

After an hour passed in pleasant sociable chat, in which she used every effort to cheer and encourage them, Eva left the unfortunate orphans, promising to repeat her visit at an early day, but taking care before her departure, to impress again and again upon them,

the comfort brought to her heart by the motto of her life—" *Brighter hours will come.*"

The girls continued at their work for several weeks with the most assiduous zeal, but sadly overtasking themselves, in the hope that they might be able to lay up something against the approach of the winter season, which was now rapidly drawing near. But with all their efforts, they found it impossible to do more than pay their board, and with the small surplus left from each week's earnings, purchase some trifling article of absolute necessity, to replace those which the long-continued sickness of their mother, and her funeral expenses, had compelled them to part with.

They were cheered, however, once in each week by a visit from Eva, whose loveliness of temper, and open, frank-heartedness of manner, had so won their hearts, they had learned to love her as a sister, and worthy, well worthy, did she prove herself of all their affectionate regard.

One bitter day in November, Laura had carried home the work finished during the week, and before she had reached home on her return, a cold, driving sleet came on, which penetrated through her clothing, unsuited as it was to the inclemency of the season; and in a few hours after reaching home, she was taken sick with a raging fever.

The kind physician, whose generous aid had been so freely and voluntarily extended to them during their mother's sickness, was at once sent for, and he came with as much cheerfulness and alacrity, as though he

was on a visit to his most wealthy patient, for *his* heart could make no distinction between rich and poor, where his skill and services were required to alleviate suffering.

Laura was in a high fever, and from the looks of the physician Clara drew unfavorable omens, but he, observing the cloud upon her brow, dispelled it, by assuring her that there was no danger to be immediately apprehended. While he was preparing a prescription for the sufferer, Eva came in, whom he at once recognized—for he had often met her at the residences of his poor patients—and turning to Clara, he said :

“ You need fear nothing where this young lady is. I find her everywhere, where suffering is to be alleviated, and where kindness and sympathy can afford consolation. You must be a happy girl, Miss Bellamy,” added he, turning to Eva, “ for you are always doing some good to your fellow-creatures.”

Eva blushed at this well-merited compliment, for in the earnest sincerity of her heart, she could never feel that the performance of the duty imposed by religion, and which always afforded her great pleasure, was a proper subject for compliments, and they always occasioned her real pain, instead of pleasure, as many too often imagined.

The prescription for Laura was left with Clara, and after the kind doctor had left, Eva discovered from her manner that something was amiss, as she appeared strangely agitated.

“ Allow me to go out and have the prescription put

up," she said, rightly divining the cause of her emotion, which was, in truth, that she had not the means to pay even for medicine for a sick and suffering sister.

"Indeed, Miss Bellamy," exclaimed Clara, "I am ashamed to say it, but I have not the money to procure it."

"And why should you be ashamed, Clara? I am sure poverty is no crime, and your paucity of means does not arise from indolence, certainly. Give me the prescription, and don't call me Miss Bellamy again, unless you wish to offend me very much."

"Dear, dear Eva, may God bless you, and make you as happy as your kindness has made us," exclaimed Clara, bursting into tears.

"There, there—don't cry—Laura wants something; see to her." So saying, she glided gently out of the room, her own eyes suffused with tears, which she could not repress.

I will not weary the reader by detailing the occurrences of the following four weeks. Laura's illness was most serious, and she required such constant attention, Clara had no time to work. Occasionally she would hastily take up the work before her, and seating herself by the bedside of the sufferer, would endeavor to sew; but soon the tears would blind her eyes, as she thought upon the future, and before she could again collect herself, Laura would require something at her hands.

Eva Bellamy knew the deplorable state of destitution to which the orphans were reduced, through the sick-

ness of the one, and the inability of the other to work ; but her generous heart was ever as ready to practice as to render sympathy, and with the most persevering energy, she went about among her friends, narrating the sad circumstances in which they were placed, and receiving from one and from another such contributions as enabled her to pay their board weekly, and to provide such necessaries and comforts as Laura's situation demanded.

Laura was confined to her bed for four weeks, and it was two months before she was enabled again to resume her needle ; but it was evident that sickness had made an inroad upon her constitution, which time would tend only to increase. In fact, it could not be concealed that her health was completely broken up, and her constitution so shattered, that she could not long survive.

She felt conscious of it herself, and it caused her no pain, except when the remembrance of what her sister must suffer when left alone came across her mind ; for she could well imagine how she herself would feel were she left alone, to struggle with poverty and distress. Day by day she drooped, and day by day Clara and Eva watched her fading into her early grave, their hearts aching with grief, as they felt they could do nothing for her.

But the fiat had gone forth, and in a few short weeks Laura Elliott was numbered with the dead.

Eva Bellamy had been during the whole of her sickness a daily visitor, adding to the joy which her own welcome presence inspired, the consolations of that reli-

gion which was all in all to her ; and they had the blissful pleasure of realizing that the patient sufferer had departed from a world of sorrows and troubles here, to enjoy the rest and reward prepared and promised in Heaven, to those who loved and served the Lord in this earthly tabernacle.

Soon after Laura's death, Eva was called to go with her mother into the country, where she remained much longer than she had anticipated, and on her return to the city, she immediately proceeded to Clara's residence. Her astonishment, however, was great to find a pile of ruins, denoting that the building had fallen a prey to the flames, nor did her persevering efforts to discover the object of her search, bring her any nearer to the desire of her heart.

Often, very often, would she sit, and sigh, and wonder what had been the destiny of the poor orphan, and she hoped, almost against hope, that the "*brighter hours*" had come for her.

Mr. Oatman, from whom she had obtained work, until the state of her health compelled her to change the employment, was applied to, but he could only trace her to an establishment in Broadway, where he had recommended her. All trace of her was lost, and Eva could only hope that the trust and confidence in the goodness of God, which was always her own sole reliance, had supported the poor girl through life, and if death had claimed her as his victim, had opened to her an entrance into that kingdom where toils and troubles cease for ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLARA felt lonely and weary at heart when she found herself deprived of the company of Eva, for she had so linked herself with her own destiny, she looked to her with the same confidence she would have entertained for a beloved sister.

Her many acts of unobtrusive kindness during the long continued illness of Laura, were remembered with the most grateful emotions, and she never forgot to offer up daily prayers for her happiness, in whatever sphere her lot might be cast.

The unceasing watchings and attentions required by Laura in the last few weeks of her existence had made sad inroads upon Clara's health, and she felt the necessity of having some relaxation from her arduous labors. But how could she enjoy this? She knew that the kind-hearted woman with whom she boarded, could not afford to keep her without promptly receiving her board, however willing she might be to do so; for she had to struggle hard enough herself to procure a maintenance for herself and child. She must, therefore, work, although she felt more like going to her

bed, and receiving the attention and kindness which her weak state of health demanded, than sitting for twelve and fourteen hours a day at work.

Mr. Oatman, the friend of Eva, continued to provide for her work, of the same kind as that she had been engaged upon, but she found it impossible, after a few week's further trial, to continue at it. Her strength was inadequate to sew on such heavy material as that from which the overalls were made, and before long she found herself under the absolute necessity of seeking other employment which should not be so hard, and the more especially was she urged to this, as her strength now permitted her to earn, at the utmost, a dollar and a shilling a week, and this with twelve hours of incessant toil.

Through the recommendation of this kind-hearted man, and thanks to the kindness of Eva Bellamy, who had urged him to befriend the unfortunate orphan, during her absence from the city, she was enabled to procure some shirts to make up from one of the most fashionable establishments in Broadway, for which she was to receive *three shillings* each. The material being lighter, she felt confident that she could earn more with less bodily labor, and miserable as was the price to be paid for her labor on them, she received them with a grateful heart.

She was, however, not very long in making the discovery that she had not made a change for the better. The garments were required to be made with great neatness, and before she had worked one week at them,

she found that the fine stitching was wearing upon her eye-sight. She endeavored to persuade herself that this was only occasioned by working at night, so she determined to rise at an earlier hour in the morning, and not sew any more at night than was absolutely necessary to enable her to earn enough to pay her board.

For another week she adhered to this change, and, although she found her eye-sight improved, she felt that her strength was sinking under her dreadful overtaking. But what could she do? She must sew on, or starve, and with a frame gradually wasting away for the want of exercise and wholesome air—with spirits depressed from being cut off from all social intercourse—with a heart filled with despair, as she trusted herself to look at the dreary prospect before her, she worked on.

At length she grew so weak she could no longer sit up to sew, but, propping herself up in her humble bed with pillows, she continued her cheerless task—the kind landlady taking her work to the shop when finished, and bringing home more as required.

No one will expect me to paint the feelings of the desolate, broken-hearted orphan, as she pursued in dreary solitude her daily work. At times, memory would bring to her the happy days gone by; when, blessed with every comfort which the care of affectionate parents could procure, her life glided on in one stream of peaceful happiness. She thought of those earlier days with bitterness, but she never dared to indulge the hope that even their shadows might return to her. She

tried to make her heart believe that "brighter hours" might come, but as each day passed over, the darkness seemed to grow more deep and black around her, and she sunk into utter, hopeless despair.

She thought of her dear mother, and oh, how she wished from her heart of hearts that she might have been spared to her; not that she too might pass her days and nights in unrequited toil, but that she might be cheered by her presence—inspired by her admonitions—encouraged by her sympathy, and blessed by her affection. She checked herself then, for she felt that such a mother was far happier now, and she derived some consolation in the reflection that she could not much longer be separated from her.

Laura, too, the loving sympathizing sister, who had gone to join their mother in Heaven, often rose up before her, and so real did her presence sometimes seem to the desolate girl, she almost felt that she had been with her in person, and had communed with her.

And Eva Bellamy, the kind, benevolent Eva, whose sympathy had so often lightened her weary heart of half its load. How she did long for her presence once more. She felt that one moment of communion with her would re-animate her sinking frame and give her renewed strength, for in her presence she could not feel desponding. But no—all comfort was denied to her. In the solitude of her cheerless chamber—propped up in her bed, she pursued her weary task, and found no peace, no ray of hope, no glimmer of light, save when, forgetting all the changing vanities of earth, she turned

her thoughts to God and heaven. Then a holy peaceful calm would steal over her soul, and, for a time, in the blissful anticipations of the great and endless future, she forgot the suffering, the misery, the anguish of the present. Daily her thoughts ascended more frequently and fervently to God, and at length she was enabled, in answer to her unceasing prayers, to look forward to the hour which should end her course on earth, as the only blessing yet unbestowed on her.

One night, after working rather later than usual, she laid her task aside, and was preparing to retire for the night, when, fancying she perceived a smell of smoke, as from wood burning, she called to Mrs. Stewart, whose room adjoined her own, for she was too feeble to be capable of any great exertion herself.

Mrs. Stewart, who had retired, worn out and exhausted with her day's toil, was fast asleep, and had not awakened. As the smell became more and more perceptible, Clara's fears gave her strength, and she opened her door, to examine for herself. A single glance sufficed to inform her that there was fire somewhere very near, for she saw volumes of smoke rising from the lower floor.

The urgency of the occasion imparted more than usual strength to Clara, and summoning all her energies, she aroused Mrs. Stewart effectually, and snatching her child from the cradle where it was asleep, hurried down stairs, shouting at the top of her feeble voice, in order to alarm the other inmates of the burning building. She had not been too prompt, for scarcely had she

reached the street, when the flames burst forth from the lower room, and before a general alarm could be given, the building was wrapped in flames, beyond the hope of preservation, and all the efforts of the generous firemen were turned to save the adjoining dwellings.

Without shedding a single tear, Clara, seated on the steps of a house opposite, watched the ravages of the devouring element, as it roared and raged through the building, and in a few minutes, that which before had been her home—cheerless though it was—lay before her a heap of smouldering ruins.

She had been unable to save one single article of her clothing, and what grieved her yet more, even amid the horrors of the scene, was the certainty that the work she had obtained from the shop to make up, had fallen a prey to the flames.

Tears at length did come to her relief—bitter, scalding tears—and they coursed down her wan cheek, as she reflected on her truly desolate situation. Without a shelter to cover her—without a single article of clothing, save those she had on, when she made her escape from the burning building—without one friend in the wide world, save Eva, and she absent from the city, where could she turn? what could she do?

Burying her face in her hands, she yielded to her feelings, and prayed that the great God would spare her further suffering, and take her to himself. But the cup destined to be drained by her, was not yet emptied of all its bitterness. How long she remained in this position, she knew not, but she was aroused by a gentle

touch on the arm, and looking up, she saw before her one of the city watchmen.

"Come, I guess it's time for you to go home," he said, in tones which he intended to be civil, but which grated most harshly upon her feelings.

"Home! sir? alas, I have now no home. There was my home a few hours ago," and she pointed to the still smoking ruins.

"Well, I guess you'd better go and find your friends, then. It won't do to be sitting here all night. They will give you a home, of course, under these circumstances."

"I have now no home on earth, and no friend but God. I am sure, sir, I know not where to go, or whither to turn."

"Then you'd better go to the watch-house with me," replied the man, whose rough nature was touched by her evident distress, and who knew of no other course to advise.

Clara shrunk back at the mention of the watch-house, for every idea she had ever formed of that place was abhorrent, and she could not bear the thought of being shut up with vagrants, felons, drunkards, and the like.

The watchman at once interpreted her feelings, and kindly assured her that she should be made perfectly comfortable, and would be left alone as much as possible. He pointed out the folly of sitting there alone in the night air, and convinced her that she would be none the better off by remaining there, than by going with

him. Conquering, therefore, her repugnance, she accompanied the guardian of the night, and true to his promise, he did make her comfortable, and placed her apart from the other inmates, so that except being compelled to hear what was passing, she was comparatively alone.

In the morning, when the watch was discharged, she was told that she had better be going, as the watch-house was about to be closed ; so thanking the men for the shelter afforded her—for rest she had not enjoyed—she left.

Faint, weary and hungry, and with scarcely strength left to walk, she moved on unconsciously, not knowing whither she was going, nor having any purpose in view. Her steps led her to the Park, and seeing a large number of females gathered about the door of a long, yellow building, she inquired of one who passed her, staggering under a heavy bag, filled with something she could not tell what, as to the cause of the gathering.

The woman stared at her for an instant, as if in wonder at her ignorance, and replied:

“Sure and it’s the Alms-House.”

Clara had heard of the Alms-House before, and the blood mounted to her pale cheeks, as she thought that now *she* must go there or starve. She soon reached the door, but on looking in, perceived that the large room in which the office was held, was densely crowded, so densely, hours must elapse ere her turn could come to apply, and as she had not the strength to stand up while waiting, she withdrew, and seated herself upon a pile

of stones near the door, for there was no other place for her, the door steps even being crowded with applicants, nearly every one of whom were Irish women.

She saw some of them go down into the large cellar, and soon after return laden with a bag, or a basket, full of potatoes, and she inquired of another woman, who had taken a seat near her on the stones, if that was all the relief they received.

"No," was the reply; "sometimes they give what they call out-door relief, to those whom they think need it."

"In what shape?"

"Why, two shillings, or perhaps four shillings a week, in cash, and in winter time, perhaps a half a load or so of wood during the season."

"God help the poor!" involuntarily exclaimed Clara.

"But," she added, "do they not admit them into the Alms-House, when they really require it?"

"Oh yes, when it is not too full; but now they say it is overflowing, and they can't take in any more."

"Then you don't think I can get in?" was the inquiry again.

"No, I haven't the least idea you can just now. However, there's nothing like trying. But there's one thing very much against you."

"And what is that?" asked Clara, in some astonishment.

"Why, you ain't a foreigner."

This was a riddle to Clara, and as she did not think

the solution would add much to her information, she forbore asking any further questions, and the woman soon after left her.

For four weary hours did Clara Elliott remain seated there. Not a morsel of food had passed her lips since early on the previous evening. She was faint, weary and broken-hearted, and she longed to lie down and die.

At length there seemed a chance that she might gain admittance, and with an effort, for she was fairly stiffened by remaining so long seated, she arose from her seat on the stones, and made her way into the office, where she found only two or three of the females in waiting.

When they had gone, she moved up to the desk, and holding by the rail which ran across it for support, she preferred her request for relief, the blood mounting to the very roots of her hair, and scalding tears forcing themselves from her eyes as she did so.

"What is your name?" asked a clerk, very gruffly.

"Clara Elliott," was the reply.

"Where do you live?"

"I have no home, sir."

"Oh, I see," said a portly, well-fed, sleek-looking man behind the bar, gazing at her over his gold spectacles; "sick, and turned out of doors, eh?"

Clara did not understand the full import of this question, and in the innocence of her heart she replied to him, though had she understood the insinuation intended to be conveyed, she would have died of starva-

tion at his feet, before a word would have passed her lips in answer to such a question :

"I am in very feeble health, sir, and was turned out of my home last night by a fire, which destroyed the house in which I boarded."

"Well, what do you expect we can do for you?" asked the portly gentleman, apparently getting tired of the conversation.

"I do not know, sir. I am suffering now from actual hunger. I have no home—no friends, nor means."

"Well, do you want to go up?"

"I don't know what you mean, sir," replied Clara, and she really did not. The brute had taken it for granted, because Clara was pale and thin, and confessed that she was in ill health, that she was one of those unfortunate girls whom despair *does* sometimes drive to lead a life of sin, in preference to a death by starvation, and who sometimes are sent up to the hospital, at the public expense.

"I suppose you have never been up before?" he asked, as if he well knew that she had, but would deny it to him.

"Never, sir ; and I don't even know what you mean by 'going up.' If you can send me where I shall receive food and shelter, I shall be truly grateful."

"Well," rejoined the inquisitor, who began to feel that he might be mistaken, "we have no room in the Alms-House just now. Come next week, on Wednesday, (this was Wednesday,) and we shall see what we can do for you."

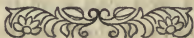
"I shall die of starvation before that time, sir," urged Clara, whose strength was fast giving way.

"Oh, no danger of that. Folks never starve in New-York ; we take too good care of them for that. Here, James, give this girl a quarter, and charge it to the out-door account."

The clerk threw a quarter of a dollar to her, and said :

"There ; go along now ; come next week—go along."

With a bursting heart, Clara withdrew from the room, and again seating herself on the same pile of stones, gave way to a flood of bitter tears. No one, however, seemed to take any notice of her, each being too much occupied with his own affairs to think of the sufferings of another ; and there she remained, the *generous sum* given by the proud city of New-York to maintain a sick and starving girl for a whole week, clutched in her emaciated hand.



CHAPTER XIV.

CLARA ELLIOTT remained seated on the pile of stones for a long time, lost in meditation. Thought, however, brought no comfort to her, and, with an effort, she arose and fairly staggered off, for she was so weak and stiffened from long continued abstinence, and from being seated so long on the cold hard stones, it was with the utmost difficulty she was able to move at all. She stopped at the first baker's shop she reached, and, with a part of the generous gift from the proud city of New-York, whose representative boasted that people never starved within her precincts, she purchased some bread, which she devoured with a relish to be realized only by those who have, like her, suffered the pangs of hunger. Having by this frugal, but most acceptable meal, gained a little strength, she wended her way toward the scene of the last night's conflagration, and when she reached it, the occurrences of that sad night were brought to her mind with such vivid freshness she could not restrain her tears.

Before her lay the ruins of that which, a few short hours before, had been a home to her—humble though

it was. Beneath the smouldering ruins lay the remains of all she had possessed on earth, and now she was a houseless wanderer, without clothes, without the means of procuring shelter, without a friend in the wide world, and she looked upon the passing hundreds who went by with feelings almost of envy, which *must* be pardoned, for the thought came to her heart that each one had a home and friends, and the contrast which a few short hours had drawn between herself and them was harrowing. She remained seated, gazing in silence for some time upon the ruin caused by the devastating element, when she was aroused by a voice which, before she looked up, she recognised as that of the kind-hearted Mrs. Stewart.

"Why, Clara, where have you come from? I thought you were burnt up in the house; although I was sure I saw you go out when you gave the alarm. Where have you been?" she exclaimed, as she gazed upon Clara, her countenance exhibiting real pleasure at the unexpected meeting.

"To the Alms-House!" responded Clara, sadly, and as she spoke, tears again broke forth. She could say no more. Those few words seemed to convey such ideas of hopeless misery, she felt that more were useless.

"But where have you been all night, I mean? I expect the Alms-House will be our portion yet for good, but I hope not. Where did you pass the night?"

"In the watch-house!"

"Good Heavens! poor Clara," exclaimed the kind-hearted little woman, whose ideas of a night in the

watch-house, even for shelter, were akin to those of Clara. "I went in to Mrs. Harris's, round the corner, after the house was burned down, and we looked all over for you, without being able to find you. But come, come in with me, she gave me a place to lie down in last night, and I am sure, though she is poor, she will not refuse you a shelter too. Every thing I had in the world was burnt up, and what I am to do, heaven only knows. But I'll try and not complain."

Clara willingly accompanied her friend to the house she had spoken of. It was situated in the rear of the street, the entrance being through a long dark alley. The room occupied by Mrs. Harris was on the second floor, the ascent to which was almost impossible, so dark was the entry, and so dilapidated the stairs leading to it. However, they managed to effect an entrance, and sad at heart as was poor Clara, her soul revolted at the thought of remaining in such a place. The room was small and darkened by the old rags which had been stuffed into the places left by the broken panes of glass. On either hand lay a pile of rags, which served as a bed for the miserable occupant, while a few broken stools and an old table formed the entire furniture of the apartment.

"Walk in, walk in," said the occupant of this den, as Clara and her companion reached the door. "You are welcome, God knows, to such as I have got."

Clara looked at the speaker, who was seated by the window on one of the broken stools, sewing upon some coarse flannel shirts, but she did not rise from her work.

She seated herself, and gave way to her feelings in tears. She knew it was wrong—perhaps sinful, thus to yield to her grief, but, for her life, she could not repress them.

“Come, my dear, don’t cry. That won’t mend your situation at all. I have lived in this room, just as you see it, for two years; and I have to work so hard to keep soul and body together, I have no time for grief. If you are the girl Mrs. Stewart has spoken of, you are perfectly welcome to stay here as long as you choose.”

“Forgive me,” said Clara, wiping her eyes, and endeavoring to compose herself. “I will try and not give way to grief again, but I could not help it now. I see you have work—can you tell me where I can get some?”

“Indeed, I don’t know; unless, perhaps, where I procured this. I have been four months before this, without a stitch. I had two children, but they died a month ago of actual starvation—for all I could get for them I had to beg for in the streets. I wandered about day after day looking for work, but I could not find any, until last week I got these shirts to make. They give me eight cents a piece, and I can make ten a week, by daylight—I cannot work at night, for I can’t afford to get candles. As it is, I only make enough to procure food.”

“I shall be thankful even for that,” said Clara, “for I am entirely destitute—quite as much so as yourself. I will go out at once and see if I cannot get some work, for I too cannot remain idle.”

"You had better lie down and rest a while," said Mrs. Harris, kindly. Mrs. Stewart has been telling me about you, and I am glad I can serve you, even by letting you stay in this miserable hole. You are welcome to stay here as long as you choose, unless you can get a better place. Do lie down, you look as if you could hardly stand up at all."

Clara declined her kind offer of taking rest, and, having ascertained the number of the store where Mrs. Harris procured her work, she started off. First, however, she determined to go to the store in Broadway, where she had obtained the shirts which were destroyed at the time of the fire; and she hoped that, notwithstanding their loss, she would be able to obtain more from the same place, for she knew it was through no fault on her part that they were destroyed.

In that expectation, however, she was grievously disappointed. The proprietor listened to her story with something of impatience in his manner, and, although he could not but be impressed with the truth of her narrative, and with the reality of her destitute situation, which was fully vouched for by her wretched appearance, he refused to give her any more work.

With a heavy heart she went thence to the store named by Mrs. Harris, and, on stating her business, was offered some coarse shirts, at *five* cents each.

She ventured to remonstrate at the inadequacy of the pay, and urged that she could not live at that rate; but the proprietor cut her short by saying he could get them made up by the thousand for the same price in *the*

country. This recalled to her mind what her mother had said, respecting the mode by which some employers are enabled to have their garments made up at half the usual prices by girls in the country during the winter, who have nothing else to do at that season.

The man, seeing her hesitation, was about replacing the shirts he had laid before her, but, reflecting that she must take these or starve, she took up the bundle and departed.

When she re-entered the wretched room which was henceforward to be her future abode, she endeavored to appear more cheerful, and seated herself by the side of Mrs. Harris, to commence her work.

The exertion, however, of walking so far in her weakened state, had proved too much for her. Excitement alone had enabled her to keep up thus long, but nature was now exhausted, and she had scarcely taken a dozen stitches, when she fell backward to the floor, in a state of insensibility.

Mrs. Harris could do nothing for her but rub her temples and forehead with cold water, for she was too poor to have at command any other restorative, and with this she was at length brought back to a state of consciousness. She was utterly unable, from sheer exhaustion, to resume her work, and when Mrs. Harris again insisted upon her lying down and taking some rest, she did not now refuse, but threw herself upon the bundle of rags, which had been the resting place of Mrs. Harris for so many weary months, and was soon lost in profound sleep.

She slept until a late hour in the morning, and when she awoke, Mrs. Harris was again seated by the window at her work.

"Come, Clara," said the kind-hearted woman, who could feel for the sufferings of the poor orphan, "here is some breakfast for you; get up, and it will give you strength, poor as it is. I have had no better for the last twelve months."

The breakfast consisted of a piece of dry bread, and some salt mackerel, which she was glad to wash down with some water, drank from an old broken tea-cup, the only one owned by Mrs. Harris; and wretched as such a breakfast was, it did afford some strength.

By working with less assiduity than she had been wont to use, she gradually gained a little strength, and in a few days she was comparatively restored. By ordinary exertion, she was able to earn *sixty cents* in a week at the shirts, and as that would procure food enough to keep off starvation, she was fain to be content.

In this manner, and with the kind Mrs. Harris, she lived for four months, never earning more than *seventy cents* each week, and receiving even that thankfully.

The winter season was now rapidly approaching, and they were actually suffering from cold. An application to the Alms-House procured for them half a load of wood, which they carried into their own room—for they dared not leave it exposed where others quite as poor, but not so conscientious, as themselves, could get at it. By using this with the greatest economy, and by

filling up the cracks in the doors and sides of their rooms with rags, they managed to keep themselves from freezing. And thus they lived, and toiled, and kept starvation from their door.

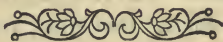
Thus long they had been allowed to occupy the miserable room without paying any rent, but the owner had recently sold the lot, and the new landlord had determined on tearing down the wretched shanties on it, and erect comfortable buildings in their stead. This rendered their removal necessary, and they started off in search of other apartments, and after many weary days, they found a room, in one of the streets near the east river, which they were allowed to occupy for *fifty cents* a week. No where could they procure one at a less rate, and even at this exorbitant rent, they were glad to have a shelter.

Into this new room they removed; but now another difficulty presented itself: no more work could be had. The proprietor of the store for which they had worked, had now as large a stock as he wanted made up, principally by girls in the country, at rates less than half those paid to women in the city, and until that was exhausted, he could give them no more.

Day after day, they wandered about, seeking employment, but in vain, and they were reduced to begging from door to door for victuals to keep them from starvation. A second application to the Alms-House for wood was refused, nor could any entreaties induce those in authority there, to give them the smallest relief. Entreaties to be sent to the Alms-House were disre-

garded : it was crowded now, and they had already so many on the out-door books, their appropriations were nearly exhausted.

I can follow them no further, but will only add my "amen" to Clara's ejaculation, as she sat on the stones by the Alms-House : "GOD HELP THE POOR!"



CHAPTER XV.

ONE year makes no very great changes in the face of nature, and perhaps, as a general rule, does not affect materially the condition of mankind. But when sickness, poverty and distress are crowding thick and fast upon us—when gloomy forebodings, or the dark shades of despair are threatening our way, the year can then bring changes, which the heart would fain not realize.

One year has passed since Eva Bellamy parted from Clara Elliott, and during that time, though she had neglected no opportunity of making inquiries, she had not been able to obtain any tidings concerning her. Yet was she not forgotten. Eva ceased not to remember her in her daily prayers to that kind Providence whose protecting power was spread alike over the destinies of both. Clara had been from infancy the child of many prayers, and now when the voice of parents and sister were hushed in death—when no longer arose, morning and evening, their earnest solicitations at the Throne of Grace for her welfare, sympathy and Christian love in the heart of Eva Bellamy had come to supply their place.

Let us turn to Mr. Simmons, and his family. He had taken a large house in the lower part of the city, for the purpose of establishing a boarding-house, at the earnest instigation of his daughters, who felt that their only chance for matrimony now, was to be found in such an establishment.

The house was well furnished, the rooms were all filled, and the girls for a time seemed happy in the change. But it was too great a change for them to bear in quiet. With the comparative prosperity which their father now enjoyed, their visions of ambition grew stronger and stronger, until they began again to entertain the idea that they were once more on the road to the temple of rank and fashion, from which they had so long been excluded, by reason of their poverty. The consequence was, that they adopted such airs as disgusted the more sensible and worthy of their boarders, who might perchance have been attracted by their beauty or their accomplishments—for they were both beautiful and accomplished.

They insisted upon dressing in the most expensive and fashionable style, and in consequence, their extravagance deterred more than one who would have made them good husbands, from venturing into matrimony with such extravagant and reckless partners. Another consequence was, that Mr. Simmons became again involved through their extravagant expenditures for dress and show. His furniture was seized, and he was again compelled to retire to his salary as clerk.

The girls, however, were determined not to submit

long to this third change in silence, and they soon afterward brought grief and shame upon their parents, by connecting themselves with men of abandoned principles, whom they had met in some of their Sunday jaunts.

Euphemia became the wife, or rather the servant, of a noted gambler, whose only recommendations were a fine person, a great display of jewelry, and an impudence which nothing could put to blush.

Maria soon followed the example set by her sister, and was married to the keeper of a billiard saloon, whose days and nights were passed in one continued round of reckless dissipation. She scarcely ever saw him, except on Sundays, and then he was always so engaged with some of his bar-room friends, she never had the opportunity of going with him in his excursions.

The reader can readily imagine the consequent misery of their career. Mr. and Mrs. Simmons remain the same worldly-minded, selfish, calculating couple. The salary which he receives, enables him to live in comparative comfort; and without a thought or care for the future, their days glide on in noiseless apathy, which will only be disturbed by the rushing of the mighty waters on the sea of eternity, toward which they are so surely and steadily advancing.

But let us turn to the contemplation of other and more agreeable changes. What has one year accomplished for good or evil in the career of Eva Bellamy?

One lovely moonlight evening, she might have been

seen walking with a gentleman in the upper part of our city. The quiet calmness of the hour, has shed its softening influence upon the hearts of both, which the noise and activity around them fails to dispel. So earnestly are they engaged in conversation, they heed nothing of the busy scenes through which they pass; but with the tenderness of mutual love, they are recalling days gone by, while she unfolds the long pent secrets of her heart—for the time has come when such may find unchecked expression.

She now rests, with all the trusting confidence of a loving and beloved woman, upon the arm of one to whom long since her heart was given. Nor had their's been a happy love, smiled upon by friends, and blessed of Providence. A pressure of most painful circumstances had placed a barrier beyond which even venturesome hope—the potent comforter of all the afflicted—had scarcely dared to look. But one year had brought a joyous change. Religion had been Eva's only solace and stay, and by the aid of divine grace, she had passed through hours of trial and temptation of no common order.

Her character had been strengthened and elevated by the contest; but these sorrows had passed away, and "brighter hours *had* come," when he who had so well appreciated the excellencies of her heart—who had so long in secret adored, might now avow to her, and to the world, the love which through years of trial had been the guiding star of his life—love which had whispered words of cheering to his heart, when despair,

at the unsuccessful struggles of existence, seemed ready to overwhelm.

Now all appeared forgotten : Eva's former sad thoughtfulness of expression had given place to a peaceful calm, produced only by the attainment of the heart's dearest, fondest wish ; and as the moon-irradiated her fair and saint-like countenance, it seemed to beam with holy light, well assimilating with the purity of the heart within. Doubts, fears and anxieties are banished. She no longer treads the rough and thorny path of life alone, and is looking forward with unalloyed joy to the hour which shall make her the bride of one, whose self-sacrificing devotion so well deserved the love of the warm-hearted, trusting Eva Bellamy.

Though they had passed unheedingly on their way, their course had not been unheeded. At some distance, following with the uneven steps of weakness and disease, was a woman, in whom traces of beauty and better days might be marked, through the feeble and ragged appearance now presented.

They had passed, but not noticed her, seated upon a stoop, with outstretched hands, hoping to receive a few pence, with which she might procure food and shelter for the night ; but she had seen and recognized Eva, and hope and affection gave her strength to track the footsteps of the only being on earth around whom her affection lingered ; but shame or diffidence—which not even poverty could subdue—prevented her addressing Eva ; but she thought to trace her to her home, with the strange hope, not of present relief, for extreme weak-

ness told her it would not be long before the last sad parting hour must come, but that she might not die *alone*. "She will come," said she to herself, "and when dying, her sweet voice will bless me."

Such was the expectation of Clara Elliott—for she it was who had followed, unperceived, until she saw Eva enter her home. Then tears, sad tears, came to her relief; the past events of her troubled life were drawn before her; again she watched beside the dying bed of mother and sister; again she thought over the days of wretchedness, of weary suffering, which since then had crushed her heart; but amid all these gloomy reflections, there came one thought of joy to her broken heart: though starvation had often threatened—though unsustained by one word of friendly counsel—though temptations to vice from without assailed in every form, she had never faltered. Though a thousand times she prayed for death, as a means of relief, still no thought of vice, as a resource, had polluted the pure current of her thoughts. She had not proved unworthy of herself, and could yet see Eva with an unstained name.

She now retraced her steps, and sought her own wretched abode, with a more cheerful spirit than when she left. To the poor woman, whose only bed she shared, she related what had passed, and with that strange kind of presentiment which sometimes seems to warn of approaching dissolution, directed her to seek, in ease of need, the residence of Eva Bellamy, and say, "Clara asked to see her."

On this same night Eva Bellamy sought her cham-

ber, with a heart filled with the repose of present joy, yet hopes and dreams of the future bade slumber fly her pillow. She had not yet slept, when her attention was suddenly arrested, by hearing the inquiry, in a strong Irish accent :

“Sure, and is it here that one Miss Eva Bell—amy is? A poor crature that’s been ailing a long time sint me, with this bit of paper, to ask if the good lady would look in upon her. My house isn’t far up yonder, and I’ll fetch her the way meself.”

Eva took the paper, and read with surprise the name of “Clara Elliott,” traced in such feeble characters, that she knew she must be very ill. She was soon ready, and taking a few things she thought might be necessary, hastened to her former friend.

Upon the way, she gathered from the woman who guided her, the few past events of Clara’s history, with which she was unacquainted. They soon entered the small, still room, where on a bed in one corner lay the almost expiring Clara. The exertions of the evening—the excitement of feeling she had undergone, had hastened this event. Eva seized a candle which stood near, and approached the bed of the sufferer. One glance sufficed to assure her that Clara Elliott lay there ; and the same glance also told her, the spirit was fast passing away.

Replacing the candle, she again drew near, and, bending her face close to that of the hapless girl, she whispered, gently—“Clara, Eva is with you.”

The sufferer, with an effort, opened her eyes ; that

beloved voice had been recognized, and a smile of peace and happiness stole over her wan features.

"Speak to me, dear Clara!" she said, seizing the hand of the sufferer. "Speak to me; can I do any thing for you?"

Clara returned a look of gratitude and affection—her wish was now fulfilled. Her hand in dying rested within that of Eva's, her voice blessed her—she did not die alone, and softly, gently, did her weary, time-worn spirit return to the God who gave it being.

"You will be rewarded hereafter, my good woman," said Eva, as soon as her emotion would permit her to speak. "I will soon return again to attend to all things necessary."

"God bless you, miss; I do not wish to be rewarded for my trouble. I'm poor myself—and it's only the poor that know how to feel for each other."

Eva soon after left the house, and, upon her return home, sought and communicated to her betrothed the circumstances under which she had known Clara and her sister; and, as she proceeded, he could not refrain from raising his thanks to God for the inestimable blessing conferred upon him, in the love of such a woman. The remains of Clara were decently interred by the side of her sister—Eva and her lover alone attending them to their last resting place.

And thus ended the career of Clara Elliott, and thus has ended that of many before her.

It may to some seem impossible that such a state of things can exist in a great city like that of New-York, and yet it is so. In the preceding pages, the author has had no occasion to draw upon his imagination for one single line. Indisputable facts—statements susceptible of ready proof, and the history of a family, told by one who knew them, have formed the basis of this little work. The citizens of New-York have long been accustomed to read in the papers accounts of the distress which prevails to a great extent among the female operatives, but they are read only to be forgotten in the next hour ; and it has been in the hope of arousing the attention of philanthropists to this subject, these pages have been written.

There is not a street in the city of New-York where more than one family like that of the Elliotts may not be found, but with one sad exception. Few of these females, when young, are impressed with those stern principles of virtue, religion, and morality, which, clinging to them through all their trials and temptations, enable them to come off victorious in the direful struggle. How few there are who, with nothing of the future to look to but a life of unceasing, ill-requited toil—with the prospect of abject poverty—sickness, perhaps starvation, prefer to face even that, relying upon the promises held out in the gospel for strength according to their need, rather than, after a brief pilgrimage, every step of which sinks them deeper and deeper in sin—sink into an untimely and a dishonored grave. Such of them whose early religious impressions have been too feebly

made to be lasting, see only the dark side of the picture. They see only a life of toil, suffering, oppression, cruelty and wrong, from those who were given as their guardians and protectors, and, preferring even a death of shame when it shall come, to such a life, throw themselves into the vortex, from which no earthly power serves to rescue them.

How many of those unfortunates who throng our streets are driven to their course of life by absolute destitution. How many, placed by their necessities in the power of unprincipled men, either employers, overseers, or clerks, fall a prey to them. But it may be said they earn proportionately as much as men, who toil ten times more arduously. A brief calculation will show the fallacy of this reasoning.

Females working on shirts at three shillings each, can not make more than three in a week—thus earning nine shillings. If they can earn this by working only twelve hours in a day, they receive, at the rate of *one and a half cents* per hour. If, however, it requires fourteen hours each day to make the same amount, they earn *one and about a quarter of a cent* per hour.

Females working on common shirts, at *eight cents* each, for that is the actual rate paid, earn twelve shillings per week. At twelve hours per day, they receive *two and one-eighth of a cent* per hour; and at fourteen hours, *one and nineteen-twentieths of a cent*.

Those who work on custom vests at five shillings each, earn two dollars and a half per week. At twelve hours, they receive *three and a half cents*; and at four-

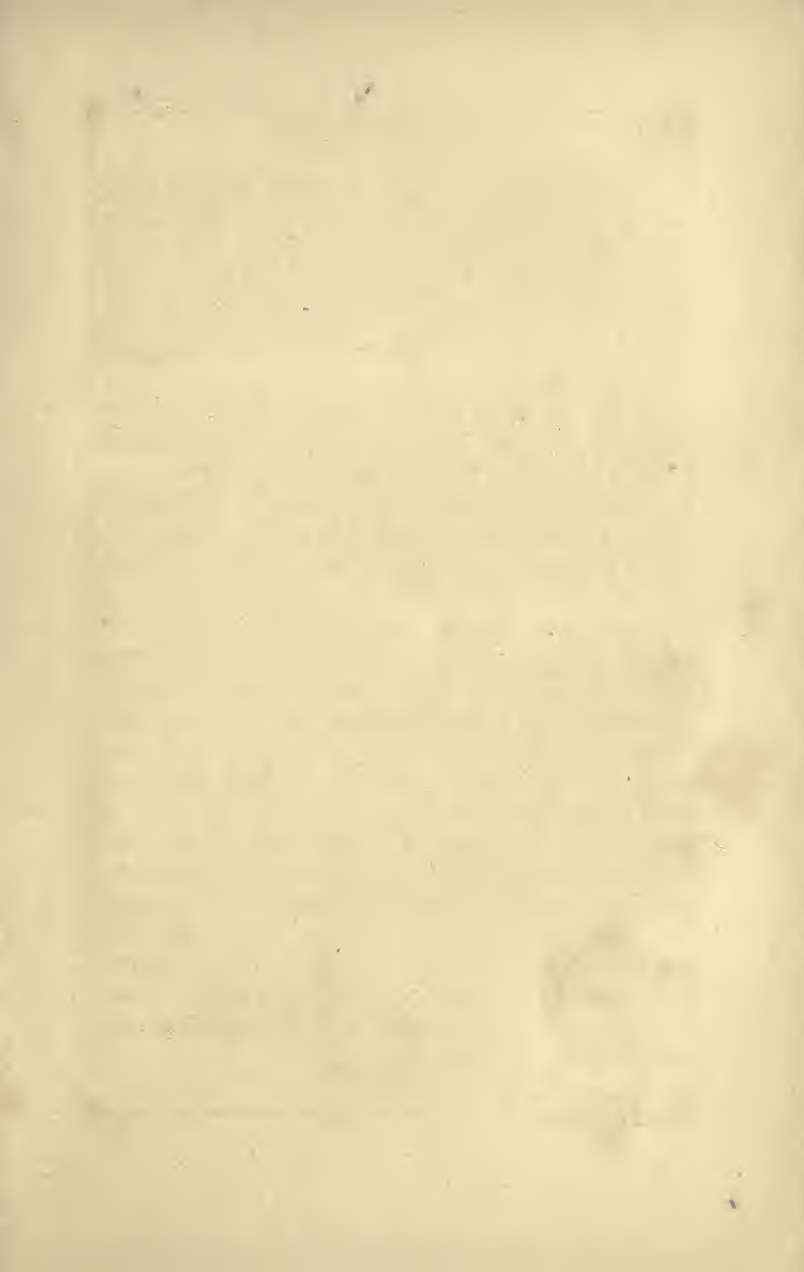
teen hours, nearly *three cents* per hour. Now the truth of these calculations can be ascertained by any person disposed to inquire into the matter at all ; and will it be longer a matter of wonder that there should be some found, who would prefer the life they are driven to lead than to wear it out in ceaseless toil, requited at such rates as those above ?

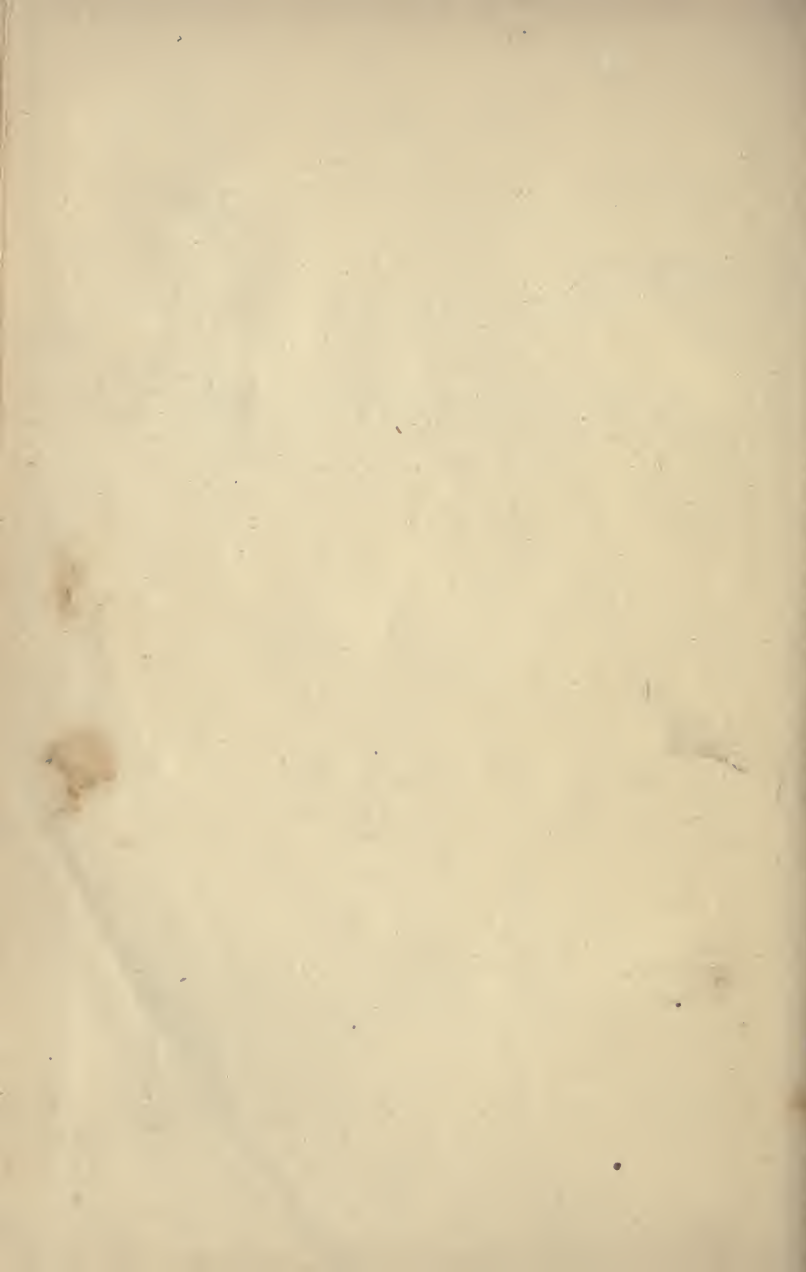
There is a broad field laid open to the labor of the philanthropist, and to such the work is commended, as worthy of all their exertions and all their efforts.

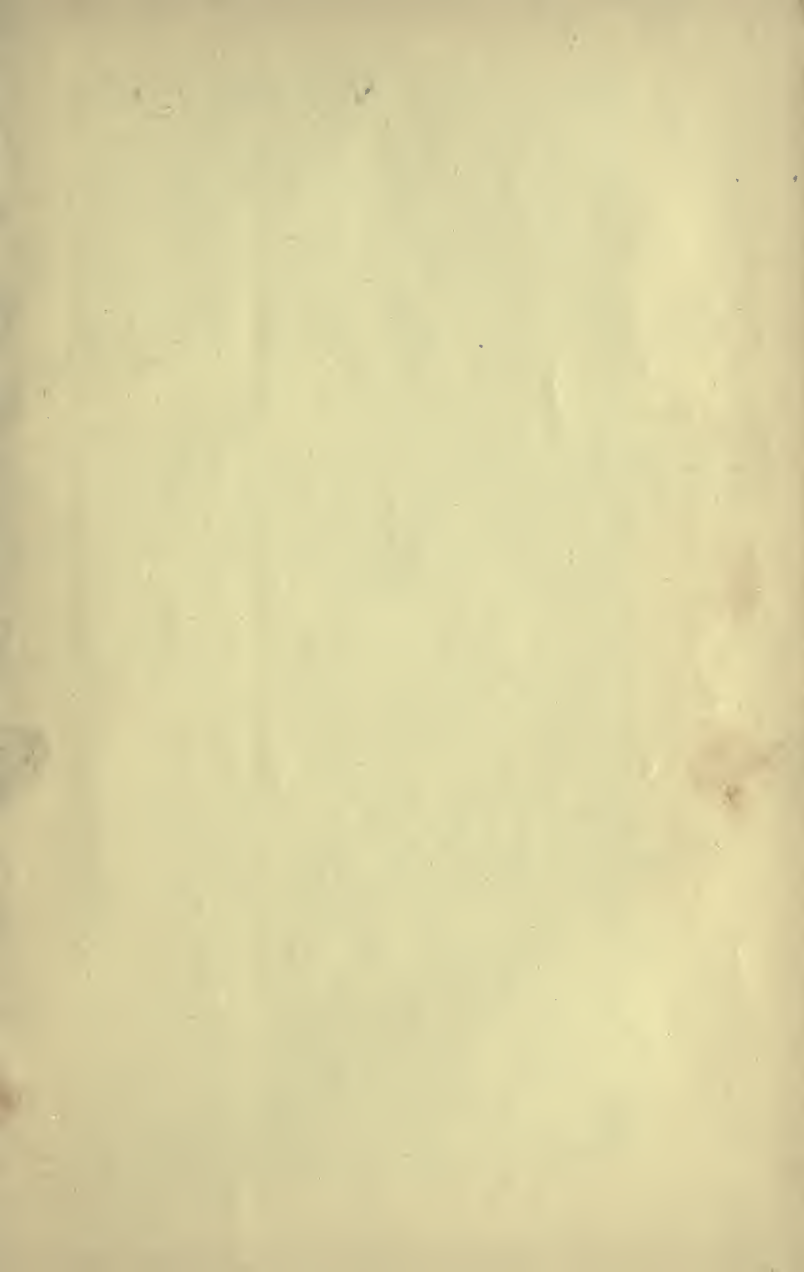
I have made no attempt to appeal to the feelings of those who may have perused these pages. I have narrated the simple truth, and, I repeat, there is not a street in New-York which cannot furnish a parallel case.

In the hope that the attention of those who can do much to ameliorate the condition of the unfortunate class of females to whom allusion is made, may be aroused to the task, these pages have been written. Much has been said and more written upon this subject, but no combined effort has yet been made—no step taken which could tend to any available end. A change in this condition of things can be effected ; and if, through any thing here written, any alteration, however slight, shall be made for the better in the prospects of the female operatives, all the aim of the author will be attained ; and in the consciousness that an impetus has been given to the good work, which public feeling will carry on to consummation, all the satisfaction desired will be obtained.

THE END.







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